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**STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN; EXPERIENCES OF REINTEGRATION
PROGRAMS**

A CASE STUDY IN ELDORET, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Naomi Kibet: STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN EXPERIENCES OF
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The phenomenon of street connected children is still prevalent despite decades of intervention. Although several developed states have managed to keep children from possible street connections, in some middle income and developing countries the matter continues to persist. Industrial countries seem to struggle the most, with inadequate government interventions, lack of resources, poverty and social instability. Children often find themselves engaging with the street to a vary extent through varied activities. Undoubtedly and empirically, persistent connection to the street is detrimental to children's wellbeing and their growth. Often the survival tactics and experiences of street connected children infringe several of their basic rights.

Therefore, there is a need for sustainable solutions that can address the matter. The challenges faced by street children are commonly known, and there are various intervention programs that are at play across the globe applying various theories & strategies. The programs are often influenced by economic, political, social, and familial factors, as well as practitioners, among other influences. There is a need to evaluate the programs and to weigh their successes and shortcomings alike. The results will support the improvement of existing programs and the development of new interventions. This case study aims to deepen the understanding of street connected children's experiences of reintegration programs.

To achieve the aims of this study, 10 children were interviewed in the spring of 2020. Various ethnographic practices were utilized to gain access to the research field. Retrieved data were processed through qualitative data analysis. The results showed that street connected children have dynamic and varying experiences of reintegration, and they were thematically grouped. Although the children often had positive experiences with immediate caregivers, certain family members or staffers acted harmfully towards the children. A lack of resources geared towards such aspects as program implementation, the training of caregivers,

and basic needs was evident. Government officials seemed to lack proper training, structures and resources on how to handle the children. Despite these challenges, children exuded hope for their future and longed for improved programs aimed at reintegration.

This study shows that despite the detrimental experiences of street connected children at home, on the street, in rescue centers, education centers and training centers, children's spirit is unwavering and they continue to hope for a better future. The positive experiences can be further emphasized and negative experiences can be addressed through resources, training, as well as structural and legal mechanisms. Evidently, there is a need for further program evaluations that include children's input. In particular, successful methods that have been used locally and elsewhere should be of key relevance.

Key words: *street connected children, reintegration, program experiences, intervention, Kenya*

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1 Introduction

Various studies of street-connected children (SCC) already exist across the globe in an attempt to understand the reasons why children are homeless and how they manage to live outside of their homes (Dabir and Athale, 2011; KSCRC, 2018; Kaime-Atterhög, 2012). Some of these studies make proposals to organizations, institutions, and governments. However, children continue to be homeless and there is a need to explore more deeply the challenges and complex scenarios posed by integration programs in order to arrive at possible effective solutions (KSCRC, 2018). In most instances education, food and shelter are the services most offered to street-connected children. Mickelson (2000, p.277) notes that education has been one of the provisions towards SCC that has succeeded in the past; however, the needs of homeless children vary depending on the problems experienced in their family and community. The profound fact remains that children's urgent needs such as safety, food, & shelter would have to be met, in preparation for possible learning.. Therefore, the key question would be why does SCC choose to return to the streets even after offers of food, shelter, and education?

The task to reintegrate SCC into society continues to be a challenge for society, families, NGOs, or governments alike. This is especially the case in developing countries. In Kenya different agencies have attempted various programs and ways to encourage or force children from the streets. However, practitioners for example at Rafiki center in Eldoret where this study takes place claim that, despite the successful integration of some groups of children, there are some children who end up returning to the streets. The purpose of this thesis is to understand why the SCC return to the street after undergoing a reintegration program. This research is a case study in Eldoret, Kenya. The aim of the study is to gain useful input from the SCC on the kind of experiences they have had while undergoing varying reintegration programs. The results should contribute to good practice and possibly policy. Recognition of pull and push factors are essential in the study as well as previous experiences of unsuccessful instances of reintegration into home or elsewhere. This research attempts to understand why some children will drop out of reintegration programs.

Several studies have been published locally and internationally on the SCC phenomenon within different towns in Kenya (Dabir and Athale, 2011; KSCRC, 2018; Kaime-Atterhög, 2012). In Eldoret, there have been various studies of the SCC regarding their health (Ayaya and Esamai, 2001), social and economic characteristics (Sorber et al, 2014), temperament

characteristics (Ayuku et al, 2004), knowledge, attitudes, and substance (Embleton et al, 2012), as well as psycho-social and nutritional status (Ayuku et al, 2004). Although the studies have managed to improve the knowledge surrounding street children, none of these regional studies delve into the experiences of reintegration programs from the point of view of the children.

Qualitative data collection and analysis methods are used. The interviewees of this research are those children who returned to live on the streets, after they had gone through a reintegration program. In this study, children who have stayed off the street for any period of time, either at the shelter, home, or training centers in Eldoret town, were interviewed. Nine SCC were chosen by two social workers and a researcher working at the Rafiki centre. Entering and accessing the research field is crucial to this study, and thus related accounts and activities are presented prior to data collection. Following the introduction, this thesis sets out the background of the street children phenomenon in general, while focusing on Kenya. Chapter three presents the literature review while chapter four discusses the research aim and question. I outline the methods used in chapter five and discuss limitations and strengths in chapter six. Results are presented in chapter seven and discussed in chapter eight. Finally, practicalities as well as the conclusions follow in chapters nine and ten consecutively.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Street Connected Children (SCC)

Accounts of SCC have existed for numerous decades globally. Ball (1994) elaborately depicts the setting, the extent, and possibilities of the “Abandoned children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930”. The phenomenon has occurred in many locations where political, social and economic growth had taken place, for instance during industrialization and urbanization in post-war Europe (UNICEF, 2001). Similarly, Hollingsworth (2008), in his ethnographic study of the street children of Latin America notes that as early as 1890, the streets of America were filled with “small hustlers” and street children. Further, Dabir and Athale give the background, the prevalence, and the realities of street children occurrences mainly during the 20th century in the USA, India and Kenya. In her sociological study of street children in Ghana, Amantana (2011) state that records of street children in Ghana first appeared in the 1990’s. In his study which exposes the situation of street children in Cairo, Fahmi (2007) indicates that the Egyptian government viewed the phenomenon as under control during the

1990s, despite an estimate of about 250,000 street children in Cairo alone. By 1989 there was an estimate by UNICEF that there were roughly 100 million SCC in the world (Aptekar and Stoecklin, 2013; UNICEF, 2003; UN, 2012; Milne, 2015). However, the figure has been used cautiously as an accurate census of street children remains a challenge and the current accurate figure is unknown.

2.1.1 Definition Dilemma of Street Connected Children

The popular definition of SCC was coined in the 1980s by Inter-NGO and has been utilized by the UN in their reporting as "any girl or boy [...] for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults" (UN, 2012, p.4). The term, however, continues to face criticism as it carries a negative connotation and it is not fully functional. The grounds are that children spend varying amounts of time on the streets and are there for varying reasons from socialization, consumption or play (UN, 2012, p.4). Fahmi (2007, p.110) supports this argument as "indeed, the bi-dimensional definition of street children fails to take into account many other factors". These are age, sex, time spent on the street as well as factors related to family of origin such as "its composition, mode or organization, the quality of family ties and economic conditions".

Terminology for SCC is often an area of vagueness among practitioners, public, and policymakers alike. In fact, it is viewed that literature pertaining street children "is one sided and disregards other aspects of human existence and social life (Moura, 2002, p. 354). The terms that are often used to describe children who work, live or play in the streets are often too encompassing or narrow, thus possibly limiting strategies and policies to curb the dire state of affairs (Moura, 2002; Dabir and Athale 2011; Lubaale 2016).

Dabir & Athale (2011, p.3-4) finds that SCC has varying terminologies which are often based on living situations and activities carried out by the children. These names are often derogatory and are used in a discriminatory manner. On the other hand, Moura (2002, p.365) finds that the same definitions happened in an alternative manner between "the portrayal of them as either victim or deviant". Essentially, an appropriate definition should be able to pave

the way for strategies towards containment of SCC phenomenon. Despite the recently more elaborate terminology of *street-connected children and youth*, Embleton et al (2016, p.365), indicate that in general it is crucial to see that the street has great impact on the lives of SCC, regardless of their constantly changing circumstances .

Street children, homeless children, or street-connected children are some of the popular terminologies used to define those children who have any level of street association (Embleton et al, 2016; Lubaale, 2016; Shrader-Mcmillan and Herrera, 2016; Schimmel, 2008; Conticini 2008; Dona and Veale, 2003; Aptekar and Ciano-Federoff, 1999). The Consortium for Street Children (CSC, 2019) illustrates that it is difficult to use a single functional term as children use the street space differently. They use the term ‘Street Connected Children’ for those children who have spent part or all of their time in the street either for work, socialization, or living with or without family connections. In this research, “street-connected children (SCC)” will be used to describe those children who live, work, socialize or have a strong connection to the street.

The challenges encountered in attaining an accurate definition, is perhaps exacerbated by the fluid circumstance of the children’s stories. Children move or make connections to the street for varying reasons, influenced mainly by economic poverty (Cradle, 2004, p.12). Another factor affecting an accurate definition is their level of attachment to the street which is influenced by several scenarios. These are the role of parents, depending on whether they are alive or not, single mother or father, as well as the level of abuse by guardians or others in the children’s environment (CSC, May, 2020). Additional complications affecting the formulation of an accurate definition of SCC include the combination of vulnerable conditions surrounding the children and the manner of the actual life on the streets, which is unique for each child (Cradle, 2004, p.12). In this thesis, when referring to SCC, the analogy implies that these are children who “depend on the streets for their survival – whether they live on the streets, work on the streets, have support networks on the streets, or a combination of the three” (CSC, May, 2020).

The quandary is, if these children are viewed as victims, they may be treated with sympathy and also “passive as objects of welfare rather than as rights holders” (Hollingsworth, 2000, p.27). Whereas, when these children are perceived as juvenile criminals, violence and possible criminal justice may become their reality (UN, 2012, p.5). Importantly so, for rights of any group in a society to be recognized, appropriate identification of the “rights-holders”,

is necessary. In fact, effective identification and implementation of rights relies on accurate understanding of “rights-holders” (Lubaale, 2016, 73). Embleton et al (2016, p.E2) point that it is crucial to recognize that the basic rights of children and youth associated with streets are often violated and yet they are right-holder. The terminology “street children” has received wide criticism from scholars, they claim that the term is stigmatizing, offensive, inappropriate, and gives a distorted message while carrying pejorative or pitiful connotations (Luubale, 2016, 72).

Generally, the tendency to define children in a view that revolves around moral values and as a separate entity in the community has “important implications (Moura, 2002, p.359. Further, the perceptions and descriptions that surround SCC oscillate between wild and uncontrollable, and on the other hand, they are understood for their unconventional behaviors due to their humanly needs and bad influence from bad company (Moura, 2002, p.359). Braistein et al (2018, p.1), emphasize that despite the lack of a concise definition, it is significant to recognize that the circumstances that surround SCC are “fluid”.

2.1.2 Why (not) the Streets

Despite the need for society and family to guide and influence the life orientations of children and their developments, it should be noted that children are not passive but active in those activities. Essentially, children are agents who are active in “constructing and reconstructing meaning in overt and covert ways” (Kaime-Atterhög, 2012, p.10). Therefore, children move to the street for various reasons. Naturally, the ultimate reason for children’s initiation into street life lies within the family, economic challenges as well as dysfunction in family structures encourages children to gravitate towards street environment (Moura, 2002, p.358; Embleton et al, 2018, p.1; UN 2012, p.6; Lalor 1999, p.5).

A systematic review of 49 quantitative studies covering 24 countries reports that SCC and homeless youth indicated that they gravitated towards the street due to poverty, family conflict and abuse, rather than their feral behaviors (Embleton et al, 2016, p.E3). In contrast, war has become another factor with unique dynamics in certain regions, for example the Rwandan genocide (Veale and Dona, pp.255-256). Specifically, within developed countries, family related dysfunctions played a major in encouraging the children to move to the streets, whereas, in developing groups the main factor was poverty (Embleton et al, 2016, p.E5).

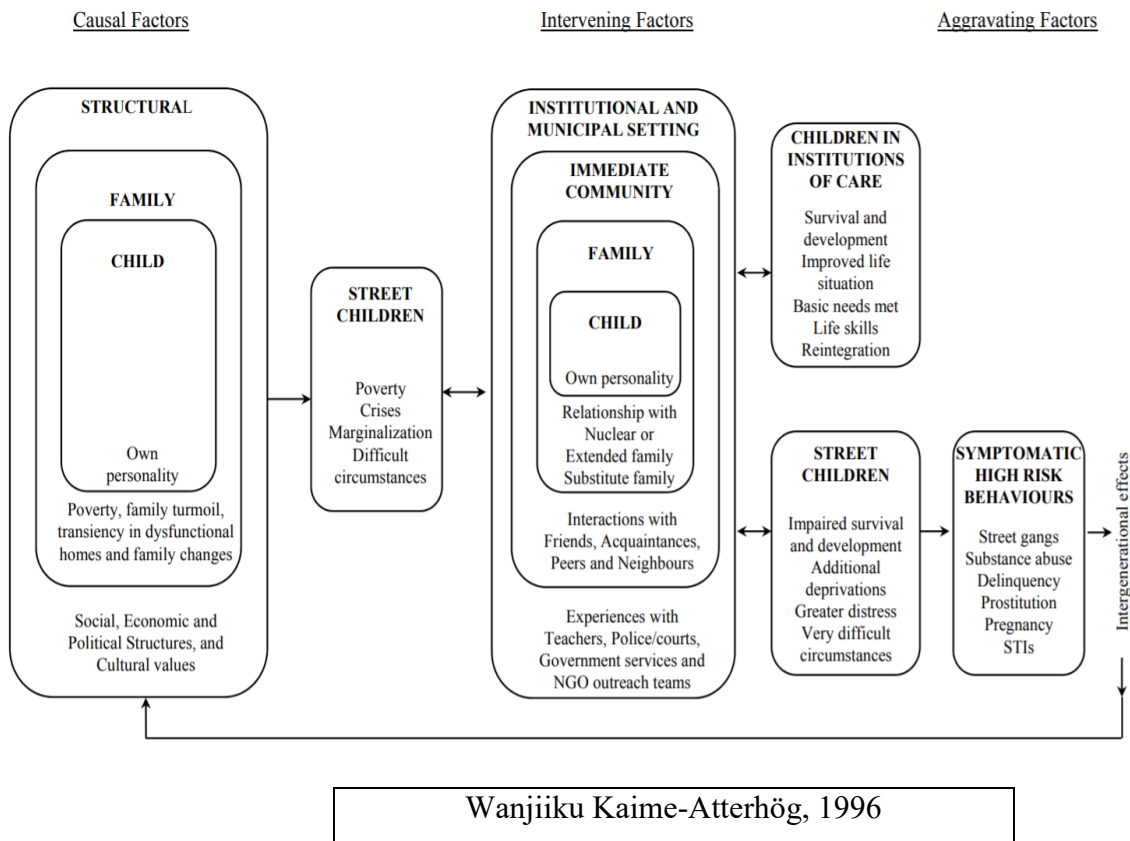
Nevertheless, more than one factor can play a role, and often these children move towards the streets as a means to survive rather than misbehavior (Embleton et al, 2016, p.E5).

Another factor that contributes to children's association to the street is the lack of access to justice especially in industrial economies (Cradle, 2004, p.15). Other factors identified are war (Veale and Dona, 2003) and HIV/AIDS (UN 2012; UNICEF 2001; Ayaya and Esamai, 2001). Further, forced or voluntary migrations of family members (Amantana 2011) as well as lack of access to education are known to contribute to children's decision towards street association (Cradle, 2004; UN 2012; Moura 2002). Fundamentally, despite similarities of circumstance and experiences, SCC are individuals with personal stories. These youngsters have followed different paths to the streets that are often multifaceted "much more like a self-regulating organic ecosystem than a fixed cause-and-effect relationship" (Dabir and Athale, 2011, p.13)

In contrast, despite these acceptable reasons, majority of children living in poverty have not moved to the streets. Similarly, in states where inequalities are high and growing, families with street connected children have been subject to discrimination, social exclusion and poverty. In fact, despite the frail state of these families, street children are not usually "violent, unstable, orphaned or abandoned" (UN, 2012; Lalor, 1999). Instead, these families have sparingly (if not), been part of social-economic preventive measures such as economic support, childcare assistance, access to health care and measures to ensure that absent parents are account for, (UN, 2012, p.6). Another study revealed that, social policy factors on employment, housing and land ownership in addition to polity and economic factors are credible grounds for children's street association (UNICEF, 2001, p.98).

Kaime-Atterhög, in her quest to conceptualize factors that contribute to children's decision towards street association in Kenya, draws up a framework of the phenomenon in *Figure 1*, below. The framework confirms the interconnected and intricate "societal or structural factors" that play a role within the phenomenon. The causal factors or "push" factors encourage children towards the streets, whereas intervening factors (including interactions with caregivers) or pull factors encourages SCC to remain or leave the streets (Kaime-Atterhög, 2012, p.9).

Figure1. A framework for understanding the street children phenomenon



2.1.3 Life on the Streets

At the street, children will employ vary coping techniques, often corresponding with their “needs and opportunities” (Conticini, 2008, p.419). The early days on the streets are often the most challenging, often emphasized by loneliness and hunger and unreliable opportunities to earn (Conticini, 2008, p.420). Once the child has managed a decent orientation and acceptance of the street, they start to move towards acceptance. Here, they start to play, meet, work, share activities and general assimilation to the environment and to peer groups (Conticini, 2008, p.423). Once the child has been accepted into the street family, despite obvious challenges posed by street life, they start to see the new environment as home, and the main focus is now and the future, and not so much about home or their family (Conticini, 2008, pp.424-425). Conticini, argues that once a longer period has past, some children may create a substantial level of dependence on the street, and may find difficulties to imagine life away from the streets (2008, pp.424-425)

Given that, these children are exposed and missing protection from caregivers, they are exposed to an environment filled with all kinds of individuals. Moura (2002, p.359) in quoting Lusk and Mason, identify these individuals as “people on transit, gangs, street families, traffickers, police, criminals and adults ready to exploit them”. They are further subject to human rights violation and marginalization (Embleton et al, 2018; UN, 2012). Drug use is often noted as an integral part of street children’s life as well as premature and high-risk sexual activities (Moura, 2002; UN, 2012), which resultantly affect the health of these children. Additionally, living on public space takes away the right to privacy and personal space as well as exposure to “public case, arousing pity, disgust, horror, and/or disapproval” (Fahmi, 2007, p.100)

Ayaya & Esamai (2001, p.629), on their study of the prevalence of diseases among street children in Eldoret, find that there is a high incidence of childhood diseases among the SCC. Embleton et al (2016), further note that on a global scale, morbidity and mortality are significantly present among street children and youth (Embleton et al, 2018, p.2). In addition, in some countries their difficult lifestyle maybe exasperated by laws which forbid some habits associated with SCC. For instance, the SCC may end up in jail for loitering or begging, a means that is essential to their daily survival. The puzzle here is that the legal system often punishes the children through its discriminatory effect (i.e. lack of universal birth registration) and lack of social protection (children’s rights) from entering the street in the first place. (CSC, 2020)

The needs of children are met distinctively across homes and countries alike. However, Mickelson elaborates that all children have similar essential needs “for sustenance, shelter, safety, affection, education, and opportunities for creativity and play”. Conversely, children of poor background have challenges acquiring some of these essentials and more so the SCC and homeless children (Mickelson, 2000, p. 275). At the streets, though not often highlighted, street children struggle to manage their relations with peers, family, government officials, or others in their network, regardless of their form, whether “abusive, exploitative and/ or supportive” (UN, 2012, p.7). Often, for purposes of protection, due to victimization and abuse, the SCC do organize themselves into gangs, which often fulfill other needs such as protection, sustenance and nurture, this is particularly important to girls and those children with no connection to their families (Lalor, 1999, pp.14-15).

Hollingsworth (2008, p.53), on his study of street children in Mexico notes that children without a home had only those friends they met on the streets and no one else. Additionally, spending all days and nights on the streets was a norm and exposure to subsequent street related risks and challenges was inevitable. In fact, similar to street children in Eldoret, Kenya, (Embleton et al, 2018 ; Sorber et al, 2014) street children are subject to “sexual predators and overzealous police officers” (Hollingsworth, 2008; Conticini, 2008), who treated the children in unacceptable manner. Further, children are exposed to HIV-infection from sexual practices (UNICEF, 2001; Conticini, 2008; Braitstein et al, 2018) at the streets.

In the same line, Hollingsworth (2008, p.54) elaborates that, the children’s lives focused on the daily survival, in which their main focus was to meet the day’s needs, such as food, security, and, staying. Fahmi (2007, p.110), adds that “Survival on the streets requires a persistent attitude and the abandonment of any orientation toward the future”.

Street children are known to use drugs such as glue, aerosol, varnish, and stain remover .In addition, it is argued that drugs are not always the centre of attention in the lives of street children as easily assumed, as “their lifestyle cannot afford the exclusive focus of their energies on drug procurement and consumption” (Lalor, 1999, p.12). Essentially, Hollingsworth(2008, p.60) report that about 95% of street children in Mexico at the time of his study used glue and other harmful products to contain stress, curb hunger urges, and confront loneliness as well as burry past painful or traumatizing events. Additionally, the harsh environment and peer influence are known to encourage SCC towards drug abuse (Cradle, 2004, p.10). Embleton et al (2012, p.1240).), report on their study of Eldoret based SCC, that, 83.3% of their respondents reported use of drugs, with 76.7% being the “children of the street” and 23.4 being the “children on the street” SCC in Eldoret.

A study on Eldoret based street connected children by Embleton et al (2018, p.7) indicate that causes of death among street children were preventable as they were due to assault (mainly through mob justice; an extra-legal punishment enacted by the public) and HIV. Furthermore, mental illness is known to be more rampant than reported within street children (The New Humanitarian, 2007). Additionally, these children who associate with the streets are denied material, spiritual and emotional needs, and thus are unable to enjoy their rights, achieve full potential and fairly be members of their society. (Hollingsworth, 2008, p.132)

2.1.4 Organization of the Street Connected Children

The habits exuded by SCC, how they carry ever day activities, and their great association to the street is unique to other groups in the society. Despite varying levels of street association, SCC share some commonalities that make them a subculture. Kendal 2006 (cited in Hollingsworth, 2008, p.7), write that sociologists perceive subcultures to be a group of persons who have similar distinguishing features, “values, beliefs, and/or norms” that are so persistent it differentiate them from the main culture. The SCC have had to build different ways of surviving the harsh realities of poverty and homelessness. Perhaps, subcultures among the SCC do exist, depending on their levels of street association and family connections. According to Lubaale (2016, p.74), many entities indentify street children to fall under three categories based on ; how much time the child spends on the street, the use of street to survive and family ties or the lack thereof. It has been identified in both Mexico and Peru, that “street children” can be categorized into three categories; the market children, homeless children and street-family children (Hollingsworth, 2008, p.38-48).

The market children: These are the children who live at home; however, economical situation forces them to participate in income generating activities in order to support the survival of their family. He notes that for the Peruvian and Mexican market children, education was a minor part of the lives, as they spend extended hours on the street and the socialization revolved around their families and those children who work in the same environment. (2008, p.38)

Homeless Children: He notes that this group of SCC was the most vulnerable, perhaps due to the lack of a home and possibly adult protection. Majority of these children have been abandoned or forced to leave their home because of poverty or broken family structures due to misuse of substances or violence(2008, p.48)

Street-family Children: This group of children as the name indicates live with one or both parents on the streets. The families collaborate in begging or performing to generate income, parent(s) often orchestrate how the child (-ren) can operate. (2008, p.41)

Furthermore, Moura (2002, p.357) notes that as early as 1980s, the UNICEF had identified three categories of street children; street candidates (working youths who live with their poor families), children living on the streets (working children with little connection to their

families) and children of the street (children living and working on the streets with no family connection). Other studies resonate with two categories of “children on the street” and “children of the street” (Embleton, 2012; Sorber et al, 2014). The identification of these distinctive, though not exclusive groups can pave the way towards targeted interventions (Embleton et al, 2012, p.1244).

To delve deeper, Fahmi (2007, p.114) in their study of the SCC in Cairo, identify two categories of children found on the streets. There are those children who are forced to be in the streets by their parents, so as to generate income for their families. And the second groups are those who run away and they can make their own decisions of when to work or play, either individually or in the chosen groups. Another manner to understand the SCC is through distinctive facets of each individual. He argues that the diversity of the street children and distinct background of each child means that it is challenging to term the SCC as a particular social group. Arguably, their extended association to the streets he argues distinguishes them from other children.

However, this distinction is not a sufficient determinant; because several factors exist that differentiates the “SCC” among themselves (Fahmi, 2007, p.109). Further, Lubaale (2016, p.74) resonates with this idea that, despite the lack of formal living, SCC may spend a lot of time in “orphanages, refuges or correctional institutions”, thus some popular definition may fail to capture diverse realities of these children. Correspondingly, Fahmi (2007, pp.109- 110) observes in his study, that these individuals are boys and girls ranging from newly born babies to 18 years of age with varying association to formal education. The means of income, time spend on the streets, family association and factors leading to departure from home vary from one child to another. Because, of these variations an “in-depth understanding of an issue such as street children, needs to be dug out in all respects”. To emphasize the adversity, is that children in one category may move to another category and vice verse at any point (Fahmi, 2007, p.115).

Age: this factor is essential as the level of vulnerability to certain risks differ according to the age. The SCC consists of younger kids, adolescents and young adults. The advantages and challenges experiences by a young child will differ from that of a young adult. The other may easily receive sympathy from begging, whereas the later may have physical ability to engage in laborious jobs. Of course those children who left home at a younger age may be seen as victims whereas those who left as young adults may be deemed “deviants, delinquents, or

criminals. The legal response to a younger child versus a young adult should be therefore established accordingly (Fahmi, 2007, p. 110-111).

Gender: All street children will face similar challenges as already discussed; however, there are advantages and challenges that are more specific to one gender over the other. For example the risk of pregnancy differentiates the hazards faced by girls over boys, when they are sexually active. Boys on the other hand are expected to avoid ridicule by being tough (Fahmi, 2007, p.111).

Time Spent on the street: Some children have spent days, weeks or years on the street, some full time and others partially. Some SCC have tried to quit street life only to return after few weeks or months. However, Fahmi (2007, p.112) notes that “there seemed to be no clear correlation between the length of time in the street and the decision to end a street career”.

Relation to Family of Origin: Most of the children who associated with the streets of Cairo had a divorced family background. Poverty was common place and often mothers would encourage the children to beg or engage in some income generating casual jobs. In fact during his inquiry, Fahmi (2007) finds that children with healthy ties with biological parents (especially the mother), were more like to attempt to disengage with street life.

Other factors: The numerous factors include the initial contact that the child makes when they first move to the street. In addition, conditions that makes the street more or less accessible as well as possible initiation rites into the streets. Further, the possibility to join a group as well as other survival opportunities that influence the existence of that child in the street plays a role. The resilience of the individual child and their ability to identify with street life as well as engage in survival opportunities are other factors. Finally, the level of police repression experienced and internal group aggression are essential in understanding the situation and hence the definition of the street child. (Fahmi, 2007, p.115)

2.2 Intervention Studies

The mid-20th century saw the push towards new social studies, which focuses on the promotion of citizenship. This development as noted by Gigengack (2014), led to development of new social studies of the childhood, which is inclusive of studies related to SCC as a structured subject within literature discourse. Gigengack (2014, p.265), note that in the past, the SCC phenomenon was reported on by journalists and charities and lacked

extensive literature. Subsequently, he indicates and later on elaborates that there are three areas of current endeavors within SCC studies. These are mainly, the institutional discourse, activist critique, and ethnographic approaches. Foremost, he presents institutional discourses as those reports established by UNICEF, ILO, and NGOs alike.

Secondly, he writes that the activist critic are studies that aim to critically analyze institutional thinking and at the same time claim children's agency and possibly make a better world for the SCC through writing. The activist critique covers a majority of scholarly studies similar to this study. Nonetheless, the third category of SCC is ethnographic approaches that attempt to avoid both the institutional and scholarly approaches. Its quest is to search for identities, and its underlying myriad discursive and non-discursive characters (Gigengack, 2014, p.265) In his 2008 ethnographic attempts, Gigengack challenges some of the critical activists' points of views, claiming that SCC are multidimensional, having strengths and weakness, exuding sturdiness and ugly sides alike, he notes that "their agency is not always positive, especially not for themselves and each other" (Gigengack 2014, p. 267).

Accordingly "correct and useful science is prescriptive. "Street children" researchers are expected to reproduce critical tales. These critical tales, he argues are presented as helpful to the street children themselves, as individuals with ability to change and having their own agency (Gigengack, 2014, pp.267-268). There are several studies that resemble academic or scholarly reports or activist critique as Gigengack terms it. Through critiquing institutional discourses and elaborating ideas through existing literature, they are able to pose questions, retaliate demeaning framing of children's agency, and impose possible implementations. Example of these studies are, *Children on the Streets of the Americas* (Mickelson 2000), *A Sociological Study Of street children in Ghana* (Amantana 2011), *Issues of access and identity* (Young & Barret 2001) & *the dynamics of street life and its policy implications* (Conticini 2008).

Subsequently, Conticini argues that contextual research on street life has often informed global academic journals. In so doing, the subject has been made narrow and framed within traditional boundaries of the responsible disciplines. Interestingly and in congruence with Lubaale (2016) who vouches for a contextual conceptualization of youngsters' street life. He argues that this kind of approach has failed to inform policy and practitioners. (Conticini, 2008, p.416)

In a paradigm, he disposes that the lack of cross-disciplinary studies creates blind spots as a result of refinement and limitations arising from increased specialization. Thus there are limited studies that link youngsters' street life to economics, sociology, and anthropology. In summary, holistic narrative should be sought through interdisciplinary studies and contextual studies that capture actual interactions inclusive of cultural, religious and individual effects (Conticini 2008).

Prior to new social studies of childhood (NSSC), studies on SCC have mainly focused on descriptive approaches and ethnography as the main means of data collection mixed with other approaches. One such descriptive study is of Sorber et al (2014) which attempts to understand and situate children's social and economic characteristics of street youth by gender and level of street involvement in Eldoret, Kenya. Axiomatically, financial independence of the street youth they claim has contributed to unsuccessful rehabilitation. Nevertheless, they realize that there is a gap in studies and subsequent implications. This gap pertained how street youth acquire and utilize money.

However, in researching SCC phenomenon in Kampala, Young & Barrett (2001, p.4) found that while "ethnographic methods were particularly useful in gaining access both to the children and street life", it played a facilitative role rather than the main role of data collection. Indeed, Conticini claims that descriptive approaches have limited practitioners and policymakers alike and that it is important for researchers in this field to close the gap by elaborating on implications. His study that reflects on SCC from Ethiopia and Bangladesh presents several aspects of a child's experiences on the streets and elaborates on its implications. He notes that when entering the street children are faced with the need for acceptance, adaptation, accustomation and dependence. Children will experience these four aspects in different ways, different order, and varying extent.

Perhaps some may not go through some phases (Conticini, 2008, p.417). For each step, the author is able to make implications for policy and hence practice and counteract. If intervention occurs during the early days of acceptance and adaptation, family reunion or repatriation to a safe home are some of the possible resolutions. However, in the later stages when the child has become accustomed to, and dependent on the street, intentional rehabilitation towards empowerment and identity development may be necessary. (Conticini, 2008)

Embleton et al (2016), recognize that states with constrained resources, often view SCC as delinquents and government officers (both police and civic) respond in conducts that are criminal, oppressive and socially excluding. Often children are unsafely rounded up by the police and transferred to unsafe care centers or detention centers; essentially, these children escape the given programs and return to the streets (p.E2). In Ethiopia, there are accounts of SCC being detained in police custody, prisons, correctional centers and other institutions by law enforcement officers, further victimizing the children (Conticini, 2008, p.418). One study on Street children in Zimbabwe reported that, 35.1% of SCC felt that the general public disliked them, while 28% of the children felt that the public viewed them as “hooligans” and 24.9% reported that the general public was supportive (UNICEF, 2001, p. 97). On the hand, despite the presence of children and youths on the streets, in less resource constrained states, child protection legislations and policies are better developed and implemented (Embleton et al, 2016, p.E2).

In her study of “street children” in Ethiopia, Lalor (1999, p.8) argues that victimization is often spelled out in the literature, but not often specified. During the late 1980s and early 1990s about five thousand SCC were murdered in Brazil by both members of the public and law enforcers as they were perceived as a threat to the society. Similarly, in Ethiopia, she notes that SCC report frequent physical abuse from the public and government officials. Often, younger girls fall into victimization and subsequent sexual abuse (Lalor, 1999, p.8-10). On the other hand, “delinquency” is the other common perception of street children, nonetheless, Lalor (1999, p.11), illustrates that street children often result to petty debts as a means to get food; however, as they progress into adolescent and young adults, they steal for drugs and expensive habits, the latter group being a minority.

Notably, some well meaning projects and programs have been known to further stigmatize, and alienate SCC. *Moeda Legal* is one such example, street children in São Paulo received vouchers instead of money from the public. The goal was to limit exploitation of children, as the children themselves would purchase food and material items using the vouchers only from a child welfare centre. At the centre, children received interventions such as “hygiene, legal support and medical treatment” and some transactions were subject to attending trainings. The downside is that the program “assumed that the street children are uncritical and passive targets for manipulation and control” (Moura, 2002, p.361).

Amantana (2011, p.134) attempts to show that research of SCC has flawed as some researchers continue to misunderstand and misinterpret children. She proposes the importance of carefully listening to and understanding the children in order to fully convey their reality that “children seek to convey in their own language, which very often policymakers and the rest of the general public fail to decode”. Similarly, studies that are contextual and implicate policy, and practice are vouched for by Lubaale (2016) and Schrader-Mcmillan & Herrera (2016). To this end, Veale & Dona (2003) research on the effects of genocide on street children is an exemplary illustration. In addition to examining the general links between violence and street children in Africa at large, the study narrows to post-genocide Rwanda. Herein contextual political and socio-cultural impacts are scrutinized. Essentially, the study highlights the implications for practice and policies.

In summary, the above literature review include studies aimed at understanding the reasons why SCC abandons formal living in pursuit of a “better” life on the streets, UNICEF (2001) & Lalor (1999). Studies showing some pull and push factors affecting street children here in Kenya (Kaime-Atterhög, 2012; KSCRC 2018; Lusire and Oruta, 2017; Oyango et al, 1991). Thirdly, critical studies showing the need for contextual, heterogenous and holistic understanding of the Street Children Phenomenon (Conticini, 2008; Embleton et al, 2016; 2019; Veale and Dona, 2013). Finally, critical analysis of the SCC phenomenon and their given policies, interventions and programs as already discussed (Lubaale, 2016; Mickelson, 2000) among others.

2.3 Implication for Reintegration Progression

Lubaale (2016) intricately analyzes the dire need for the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to comment on the definition of street-connected children. She argues that it is an obvious fact that situating and identifying this target population guarantees ownership of their rights. Axiomatically, SCC may share commonalities; however, cultural, religious and individual variations exist, posing a challenge for policymakers and practitioners alike. Nevertheless, Lubaale (2016, p.79) argues the necessity for a standard approach to “SCC” whilst keeping in mind the shortcomings of homogenous models in that context. In so doing, the heart of policies and practice should be the rights of the children. Criteria for selection and definition should respond to infringed rights due to street connection rather than time

spent or activities on the streets. Therefore, it is argued that no single approach can satisfy the SCC phenomenon in Africa, needless to say, globally elsewhere. Thus a contextual conceptualization is encouraged, despite traditional homogeneous conceptualization well known to the practitioners (Lubaale, 2016, p.80). Eventually, thorough and intentional policies and practices that internalize these aspects are necessary.

In sequence, the UN as an international body intentionally for the welfare of its members and surroundings has some guidelines for reintegration procedures of children outside of home. Naturally, the body imposes these attributes to states, often focusing on prevention strategies, before delving into conduct and subsequent follow-ups. However, states have often failed to identify contextual phenomenon of the SCC and thus practice has relied on “homogenous constructions” that are ineffective in the redress (Lubaale, 2016, p.72). Ideally, according to the UN, states should pose and uphold policies and structures that promote parental care thus reducing or abolishing the need for alternative care or abandonment altogether. In essence the policies should address the basis for abandonment by focusing on combating poverty, discrimination and marginalization. Thus, it should establish measures to ensuring birth registration, available housing, basic health, education, care and social welfare services. (UN, 2010, p.7)

Moreover, research shades light that those children on the streets undergo different stages from first shocks to being fully integrated on the streets (Conticini, 2008; Barnes et al, 2018). Each child therefore will respond to programs differently, and perhaps the length of stay on the streets will have an effect. In his study, Conticini (2008, p.19) elaborates the different stages of entering and surviving on the street. He notes that children can be situated into different stages, “initial situation of managing survival strategies to more complex and articulated development of coping strategies built on experience, skills development and access to resources precluded at an initial phase.” In fact another research resonates with this idea as it argues that the period spent on the street was reflected on the children’s level of “dissociation” (Barnes et al, 2018, p.8). These factors insinuate that policy and practice should correspond to child’s needs depending on the level of street association.

Furthermore, Conticini shades light to somewhat reductionist studies focused on street children. These studies limit the understanding of street children’s life orientation, and hence the possibility for holistic interventions. For instance, the observations which claim that “street children” focus only on today’s survival and needs (Fahmi, 2007; Hollingsworth,

2008) and are not oriented towards the future. This view of street children would hinder interventions that views street children as agents with dreams and future aspirations away from the street.

In the light of the above references, researchers are further challenged to take note that these children have dreams and aspirations. Therefore, in researching and developing policies, in depth understanding of children's experiences is necessary. Effectively, future investigators should incorporate program evaluations. Thus assuring complete realization of lucrative ideas attained from "interventions and treatment protocols." (Barnes et al, 2018, p. 13) The dominance of longitudinal studies of the SCC phenomenon has limited understanding to the extent to which the push factors affect the children (Sorbel et al, 2014, p.2).

One such study on "successful integration", by Schrader-Mcmillan & Herrera (2016) illustrates the benefits of theory and intentional methods. They claim that attachment and trauma theories and subsequent therapeutic models played a crucial and valuable role in reintegration programs of children who have experienced chronic violence, loss and neglect. The success of the case study lied within accurate understanding of the theories and the theory's necessity for designing methods, strategies as well as schedules. The argument of the study was that similar approaches are essential for meaningful reintegration. However, aspects such as cultural, family, age, or gender were to be assessed to retrieve tailored methods.

Therefore, in approaching research and eventually policies and social work, sensitivity to a variety of issues is essential. In addition, "development practitioners and policy makers cannot get away from love and respect as a first step of intervention: words used so often in humanities but hardly ever heard in development debates." (Conticini, 2008, p. 20) Furthermore, he states that it is important to recognize that because these children choose to run away from home, it does not mean that they have chosen an end to their lives. In fact most of them run away in the hope of a safer, easier, lucrative, free habitat. Street children despite their focus on immediate risks and challenges, also formulate the lives on the basis of their "future aspirations and ambitions." (Conticini, 2008, p.19)

Arguably, if the SCC associate work or live in the streets due to the major factors of; poverty, family dysfunction and abuse (Luubale, 2016; Veale and Dona, 2003; Ayuku and Esami, 2001; Moura 2002; Embleton et al, 2016) then some policies and practices, applied by some

states that view SCC as juvenile criminals, should be scrutinized for possible human right infringement. For the Kenyan case, regarding street connected children and youth, there is a necessity for coordination among policy makers, stakeholders and the community, towards an increased evidence-based policies and programs (Embleton et al, 2012, 1244).

Despite successes and failures alike, there are minimal studies that have been done to root out why the children struggle to seek, accept and retain the help they are offered to escape from the streets. The case is no different in Eldoret, where only a few studies have been published. One such study by Sorber et al (2016), indicate that some SCC in Eldoret with a certain level of financial independence, may struggle to remain in rehabilitation centers and are more likely to gravitate back to the streets. Whereas, street children in Cairo with healthy family relations are more like to respond to rehabilitation and reintegration (Fahmi, 2007).

In essence, the above review shows research that seeks understanding of children's perceptions and leads to practice or policy development should be encouraged in the area of SCC studies. Despite general understanding of SCC in the international arena including a few Kenyan case studies, "the prevalence of SCC throughout the world is disquieting" (Lubaale, 2016, p.71). Fundamentally, practice should respond to all round pull and push factors and to aim for a holistic approach for every child. Essentially there is a need for further research that implicates policy and practice on a global scale as well as in Eldoret, Kenya. A focused and intentional understanding of the SCC heterogeneity Sorber et al (2014) or a contextual approach Lubaale (2016) will aid in improving current policies and practices.

3 The SCC Phenomenon in Kenya

The start of the SCC phenomenon in Kenya dates back to the first major war in Kenya, Mau freedom war which occurred in 1952, and by 1969 the first SCC occurrence in Nairobi had been documented, and subsequently in 1989 in Eldoret (Ayaya & Esamai, 2001, p.628). Kenya has some of the highest numbers of SCC in proportion to population. The Kenya Children of Hope Organization (2019) quotes the CSC that in 2007 the estimated number of SCC in Kenya is between 250,000 and 300,000 a number equivalent to the population of Orlando, Florida, with about 60,000 located in the capital city alone.

For Kenya, the mean age of street children in according to one study was 12.6years and 85% of street children came from female headed households (Veale & Dona, 2003, p.255). Dabir and Athale (2011) present that poverty plays a major role in pushing children onto the streets

in Kenya. Furthermore, children from a single-parent home, where the majority of parents are women, are highly vulnerable. The children are often sent out to work on the streets or in people's homes and are gradually attracted to the streets or run away to the streets. The study by Embleton et al (2018) on the cause of death among SCC in Eldoret exposes that children resort to a perceived better life on the streets due to poverty, abuse or family conflicts.

According to Embleton et al (2018, p.1), violence, being targets for exploiters, being recruited to gangs, exposure and addiction to drugs, being discriminated against by the legal system as well as unaddressed physical and mental health issues are not exceptional to Eldoret based street-connected children. They note that in Eldoret town SCC are subjected to harsh and inhumane conditions that violate their human rights, misuse of substances, exposure to diseases and often experience violence and abuse by their peers, family members, adults in the environment and the police. Similarly, Cradle et al (2004, p.11) relate that extortion, physical and verbal abuse by the general public and more so from police officers are quite common in the daily lives of street children in Kenya. In fact, the occurrence is so prevalent that most children report this matter as their biggest challenge on the streets, more challenging than the absence of shelter and food.

3.1 The SCC Programs in Kenya

In 1982, the phenomenon of street children was discussed in the National Workshop on Child Labour workshop sponsored by the WHO; subsequently, in 1985 a paper on "street wandering Children" was presented in another workshop sponsored by the UNICEF (Onyango et al, 1991, p.2). Nevertheless, it was assumed that the existing juvenile institutions would manage the SCC situation. However, as the numbers increased it appeared that the NGOs and government institutions were unable to manage, and the existing approaches seemed to exasperate the matter (Oyango et al, 1991, p.3).

Since then various NGOs, Church Based Organizations (CBOs), business persons, private citizens, associations, international organizations and the Government of Kenya have applied various techniques to counteract the matter (Lusire and Oruta, 2017). Some programs that have existed for few decades already include;

- Public programs run by the Children Department mainly focusing on supportive and preventive services, on a national Scale.
- Public rehabilitation and training include; Approved schools (majority of beneficiaries are SCC) and Juvenile remand homes (short-term holding institutions for juvenile delinquents).
- Undugu Society of Kenya; focusing on supportive and preventive services, majority of beneficiaries are SCC
- NGOs focusing on prevention, support and development for poor and needy children (SCC are beneficiaries), Few examples include:
 - SOS Children's Home
 - Disciples of Mercy,
 - Starehe Boys Centre
 - Action Aid Kenya
 - Christian Children's Fund
 - Child Welfare Society of Kenya
 - Church Based Organizations
 - Community Based Organizations
- International Organizations such as Consortium of Street Children (CSC), USAID, AMREF, UNICEF, UNAID

One study of street children in Western Kenya indicated that street children were attracted to rehabilitation programs due to provision of food, clothing and recreation such as play and game, and if these services were not offered satisfactorily, the choice to return to the streets was inevitable (Lusire & Oruta, 2017, p.13). An Eldoret based study of “street children” experiences showed that a substantial amount of the SCC (70%), were not satisfied with services provided at rehabilitation centers Morangi, 2012 (cited in Lusire & Oruta, 2017, p.13). The tendency is perhaps a reflection of the government's services, such as forcefully

taking the children to government rehabilitation centers without prior counseling and preparation (Lusire and Oruta, 2017, p.13).

The existing Kenyan policies towards children and SCC in particular are dogmatic and are coupled with ineffective strategies to curb the disquieting state of the street children. Cradle et al (2004) report that despite “numerous reforms and repeals, children on the streets continue to be treated in ways that breach many of their basic human rights”. In addition, detaining and removing street children under charges of “protection and discipline” is a common method for the government in Nairobi to keep the streets clear of these children, (p.17). This often occurs without notice, explanations, and compensation for the children (Cradle et al, 2004, p.17).

Similarly, the police in Kenya underutilize methods at their disposal, such as police warnings, cautions and admonitions towards SCC. These items are not formalized into police structures and therefore police interventions are often influenced by the officer's character (Cradle et al, 2004, p.31). Thus possible misuse of power, irregular practice, unaccountability and lack of synergetic follow-ups may ensue. To aggravate the matter, police station practices place those children in need of protection and care and those charged with criminal offenses in the same premises. This further minimizes any efforts by the NGO to effectively and quickly handle “welfare cases”. (Cradle et al, 2004, p.31)

The guidelines for children’s intervention from the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), inform that the court should be the final instance. Specifically, article 40 recommends that states ought to offer diversions such as “care, guidance and supervision orders, counseling... and foster care” (CRC 1989, p.11) to avoid institutional care and ensure that children are dealt with appropriately and in accordance with their misdemeanor. In their report on street children and juvenile justice in Kenya, Cradle et al (2004, p. 23) notes that remarkably the Children’s Services Department of the Kenyan government allocated about two- thirds of their budget to care institutions. The remainder of the budget is left for community social work, scarce manpower and “development of other alternatives to these correctional facilities” (Cradle et al, 2004, p.23). The CRC guidelines are in place especially as children often commit petty crimes. In the interim, the article encourages that stakeholders should attempt to allocate solutions that involve parents and counseling. In Kenya, the court

remains central to street children cases as there are “no legal mechanisms or policy framework in place that offer substantial diversionary alternatives.” (Cradle et al. 2004, p. 19)

The Kenyan government initiative towards juvenile justice, a phenomenon that often touches street children, is seen in the establishment of District Children’s Advisory Committees. The aim of these provincial committees is to improve community and civil society involvement in the administration of issues pertaining to juvenile justice. Nevertheless, lack of leadership and funds to hold essential meetings have led to repetitive agendas and a lack of clarity over purpose. (Cradle et al, p. 31)

To delve deeper into the SCC phenomenon in Kenya, there is a prevalence of insufficient funding for temporary care homes, community-based safety nets, or fostering networks (Cradle et al, 2004, p. 31). According to the report by Cradle, the Undugu Society of Kenya and the Consortium for Street Children, agree that all stakeholders require an overhaul (Cradle, 2004). Pragmatically, the legal system, policies, and government directives require improvements that would then impact government initiatives, the strategies of NGOs, and community as well as faith-based projects. Only then can Kenya move closer to CRC’s ambition for vulnerable children (Cradle et al, 2004, p.32).

3.2 Eldoret, The Setting

Kenya is located at the eastern part of Africa and shares its borders with its East African counterparts Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. Together they form the East African Bloc. As a colony of the Great Britain, it gained its independence in 1963. The equator cuts right across the Kenyan area of approximately 224, 960 square miles. Kenya has 47 counties, which act as local governments headed by governors. The local governments converge to form the national government headed by the president. The 2019 census shows that Kenya has a population of 47.6 million and 1.2million people living in Uasin Gishu, with over 400 thousand inhabitants located across Eldoret town (GOK, 2019).

This case study takes place in Kenya’s 5th largest town, Eldoret which is the main town of Uasin Gishu County, hosting the local government centralized headquarters & offices. It is located in the western region of Kenya, and it is inhabited with people from all regions of

Kenya. Like elsewhere, the SCC have different living arrangements in Eldoret, some spending their whole time on the street (fitting the definition of “children of the street”), and others only part-time, (fitting some characteristics of “children on the street”) (Embleton 2012; Sorber et al, 2014). Part-time implies that these children have a home, however, they may spend most of their day in the markets or away from home. A home in this setting is with family, relatives, strangers or friends. There are several children’s homes, training centers, a temporary home for street mothers and their babies and a drop in center (Rafiki center) in Eldoret area. In addition, there is a government facility that often round up the children and take them to stay. Similarly, the Uasin Gishu Government has been reported to have forcibly, and with the help of police removed the SCC in Eldoret environs and drove them to stay in the nearby western counties (Embleton, 2018, p.6).

In reference to 1989 reporting on initial street children in Eldoret (Ayaya & Esamai 2001), there was an increased population of SCC within Eldoret during 1991-1992 and again in 2007-2008, due to post election violence resulting in internal displacements, loss of proper housing and income (Embleton et al, 2012, p.1235). In Kenya, hence Eldoret, factors that contribute to SCC phenomenon are “poverty, unplanned pregnancies, parents’ death, growth of a town, disrupted extend family system, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse” (Ayaya & Esamai, 2001, p.628). A study done by Sorber et al (2014, p.8), of street youth in Eldoret reported that according to the youth, they left home due to poverty, alcoholism and violence.

Similarly, the number of SCC in Eldoret is estimated to be between 1000 and 3000 (Embleton et al, 2016), and is representative of majority of ethnic groups in Kenya. One study of point-in-time carried out in 2016, revealed that there were over 1400 SCC in Eldoret, of which 73.9 % were males with a median age of 18 (Braitstein et al, 2019, p.35).

Nevertheless, the government and non-governmental organizations have tried various approaches to remove the SCC from the streets unsuccessfully. There are several projects and means of encouraging SCC to re-integrate into family or group homes in Kenya. One such program is a drop-in center for SCC known as the Rafiki Centre. The centre is situated at the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital (MTRH), located close to the center of Eldoret town. The Rafiki centre works together with the Oscar project, which is a research based project. Oscar is an acronym for “Orphaned and Separated Children’s Assessments Related to their health and well being”. The Oscar project has successfully researched and published several studies of SCC in Eldoret town including their health situations, economic practices, survival

and other key topics related to street children. They have an investigator team of several professional researchers and educators who are dedicated to street-connected studies in the town and region. The publications available at the OSCAR website, as well as, interaction with some researchers from the same organization, have equipped me with confidence and optimistic attitude towards this research.

The substantial presence of street children (from different regions in Kenya) in Eldoret and existence of various interventions programs in Eldoret makes the location a suitable place for this study. In addition, the readily available connection to the street children accessible through Rafiki Centre is an added resource to this study. The Centre will ensure that interviewees have actually been through the confessed programs.

3.3 Alas

Generally, the SCC have not been considered as whom they really are, “children”, who are bearers of and deserving of dignity, love, and respect (Schimmel, 2008, p.219). In fact the rhetoric is that SCC is the most visible child and yet they are the most invisible. The main concern for this study, are not those SCC who find their successful path to reintegration but rather those who have struggled to remain in the given interventions or program.

The quest to re-integrate SCC across the globe is rather challenging as individuals vary from one to another. The setting, experiences, resources, techniques and culture surrounding the reintegration program vary from country to country if not program to the next. In Eldoret, the problem has not been different. Thus the need to study reintegration approaches for further evaluations and development has been necessary. The aim of this study is to understand the experience of reintegration programs of the street connected children. The point of view of the children is crucial to this study.

4 Research Aim & Question

In reflection to the literature review, there is a dire need and gap for extensive and holistic studies that implicate policy and practice. Furthermore, the existing policies and practices are

in need of evaluation. Programs and strategies deserve scrutiny to source out valuable and inadequate practices. Holistic studies pertaining to youngsters' street life are a combination of context based studies and policy implication Lubaale (2016) and inter-disciplinary theories and policy implication Conticini (2008). This study will attempt to mirror the nature of “contextual conceptualization” (Lubaale, 2016), in attempting to discover the children’s experiences of various programs they have been part of. The results will contribute to existing research and further support development of practice and policy related to SCC, in Kenya and elsewhere. It is therefore necessary that this research will attempt to bridge the gap for the case of Kenya by getting the children's perspective on the programs they are part of. The main question therefore is;

“Why do Street Connected Children return to streets after undergoing a reintegration program?”

The research will strive to understand the experience of the children during the integration programs, while looking at the broader life situations of the children. For example age, relations with parents or guardians, reasons for departure from formal home, use of substances or period already spent on the street. The research focuses on 10 interviewees, thus, its strengths and weaknesses will be highlighted. In sum, this study inquires from the interviewees on their activities, interactions and views related to reintegration programs. Accordingly, these factors will be discussed and their efficiency or the lack thereof evaluated. Consequently, possible policy and practice implications are drawn at the end of the document.

5 Methodology

In this chapter, entering the research field, data collection and analysis methods are presented. Initially, an aspect of ethnography inspired how to enter the research field. These aspects were utilized to facilitate interaction, immerse oneself in the field thus increasing understanding of practices, choices and habits. Secondly qualitative methods are used to collect and analyze data. It should be clarified that often, ethnography is utilized as a data collection method. However, in this study aspects of ethnographic method are borrowed and used as a facilitative tool.

Approaches used to enter the research field, mimics a study done by Young and Barret (2001) of SCC in Uganda and it is discussed in subsequent paragraphs. Secondly, the qualitative method of the data collection chosen is semi-structured interviews; its justification and relevance are elaborated in this chapter. Finally, thematic data analysis will be utilized in which codes, and themes will be assembled for analysis

5.1 Entering the Research Field

Some aspects of ethnographic methods were applied purposefully to give access to the streets and street connected children. This method which had been used by Young and Barret (2001) as a facilitative method and not a means to collect data SCC seemed suitable. The SCC have been perceived as being a subculture (Hollingsworth, 2008). Therefore, it was necessary for me to acquaint myself to the way of orientation, communication, and interaction of the SCC, in preparation for data collection. Because of my lack of knowledge of the street connected children, in addition to literal research this method would support my data collection, expand my understanding, increase objectivity and possibly decrease my bias. Thus, I as the researcher attempted to immerse myself in the lives of the SCC by regularly meeting and attempting to join them in various activities. Most qualitative methods are flexible in nature, and ethnography is no different, however, a plan or design to begin with is essential. O'reilly (2004, p.27) argues that "it simply means that the design has to leave space for fluidity and flexibility. The social workers at Rafiki Center were helpful, in this first step of entering the field. They informed me of good times to attend programs, answered any curiosities as well as necessary cautions.

During the entering the field stage, I visited the field 2-3 times in a week for 5 weeks in a row, with a total of 12 visits. Each visit lasted between 4-6 hours. During my field visits I tried to practice the local way of speaking Swahili, and I tried to speak as colloquial as I could without appearing strange. Because of the nature of street life, I dressed simple and casually.

Due to the large number of street children in Eldoret and several physical places they spent their time at, I had to narrow my physical research field. Apart from visiting some of the "bases" (where they spent most of their rest & play time), I chose to spend time in the football field and at the drop in centre. At the drop in center, I attended several activities guided by Rafiki social workers. They introduced me as a student following the Rafiki centre activities,

and right from the start the SCC didn't give much noticeable attention towards me. They seemed to carry on as usual; perhaps they are used to having volunteers or outsiders joining from time to time. I tried to remain subtle and participated only when invited.

In sequence, the researcher should acquaint themselves with the relevant literature paying attention to existing theories on the area of study and thus proceeding in an informed manner, whilst prepared for surprises (O'reilly, 2004, p. 26-p.27). Because the entry of the researcher into the research field will influence everyday occurrence to varying extents, depending on the uniqueness and differences in appearance, behavior, language etc. Persons in the environment may likely respond with curiosity, as Schesul et al (2012, p.1) writes that the responders may act with suspicion and consciousness.

During the teaching sessions I helped to mark and give feedback and during group activities I joined in as one of the children without any responsibility. At Rafiki center, there is a tent which is used as a classroom for about 30 children. Two –four adults were often present, each taking a different role of teaching, playing games, and singing, spiritual & emotional guidance. Because it is a drop in center, there are often various interactions between SCC and social workers and other staff members.

They also had football sessions. The football pitch was an open field with goal posts, the spectators sat on the grassy ground. The sessions would last between 2-4 hrs, and players would take turns to rest or drink water. The days were always sunny and bright. On the first day I sat by myself watching the game and other interactions among the SCC, however in the following sessions I started sitting with the rest of the children. Often, mainly boys and few girls would play while about 50%- 70% of those present watched on. Those who played seemed to have strong physique and less reliance on substances compared to those who sat. On the days where snacks were served after football, there were more spectators (SCC) than those days in which they didn't serve snacks. Mothers with children were present on the field. In fact one time a mother left her 9month baby with me so she could play football. Initially, I hoped to join in on the games but later on I decide it was better to use the time to chat with those outside the field and cheer on. After a while, I became comfortable hanging out with the SCC, one time I fell asleep watching the football.

Simultaneously, the researcher should table possible biases regarding theory, model and hypotheses by considering these steps from (Schensul et al, 2012, p.6)

- Identification of a priori assumptions and hypotheses/hunches and associations
- An initial guide for where to start looking and what to start asking about
- The opportunity to test one's knowledge in dialogue with others and the literature to see if one is on the

It was therefore my everyday goal to remain conscious of my presence and my thoughts. I paid attention to the way other social workers associated with the children and I picked some practical aspects. For example the SCC had a name to address each other. During some discussions, I got the idea that they didn't like the colloquial name "*Chokora*" for the street children. The local society could easily justify cruelty towards the street children; however, it was interesting to see how they viewed their situation and actions. The social workers were able to discuss the use of "sniff glue" without creating a tense situation. Most of them were ashamed of sniffing glue but admitted that it was necessary for their living.

Young and Barret write that, as a result of spending time with the children, the researcher was able to access insightful information, as relationships were built between the volunteer and street connected children. This method occurred across time, moving from NGO worker to street researcher and eventually an inside informer (Young and Barret 2001, p.8). Once trust has been achieved and the children do not have visible agendas for participation, the phase of choosing interviewees will begin.

Therefore, utilizing methods that are child centered or child led methods as well as sensitive communication, researchers can attempt to access the information required (Young and Barret, 2001, p.12). In the field, I met all kinds of street connected children, including babies, mothers, fathers, adults, part-time street connected, those who have re-returned to the streets, girls and boys. To lessen bias and increase objectivity, I allowed the social workers at Rafiki center to help choose interviewees. The social workers knew the life stories of most of the children who frequented their programs.

Interviewing with children introduces more dynamics compared to adults. In this scenario most SCC may have minimal or no formal education. O'reilly and Dogra (2016, (p.96) write that communication is integral. They note that often children have to request directly or indirectly to adults before they can speak. Therefore, the researcher should pay attention to the age, cognitive ability, communication abilities and therefore the nature of the questionnaire must be within their capabilities. There are suggested steps to take and to

consider during the frame of the “interview”. During the interviews, I attempted to pay attention to these:

- Introduce yourself
- Avoid using technical jargon
- Be patient
- Be mindful of coercion
- Be polite and professional, but also warm and friendly
- Be aware if any communication difficulties that the child might be experiencing

(O’reilly & Dogra 2016, p. 99)

5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative methodology has been applied in this study and agreeably, Frattatoli (2012, p.221) argues that this method should be used when the context and details are essential to the study. He adds that the research questions and aims should guide the choice of method. Because the question here is inquiring “what are the experiences of the street connected children”, qualitative methods are suitable for exploring. In this study data was sourced from semi-structured interviews. Roulston & Choi (2018, p.8) elaborate that in theory, interview data should reflect the “inner contents of people’s minds and authentic selves” which is the main aim of this study. That is to delve into the life experiences of the SCC and to understand their choices to return to streets after reintegration. Semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer to probe or ask follow-up questions. Some aspects of ethnographic interview methods were utilized, such as interviewing in interviewees language, extended observation and participation in research settings as Roulston and Choi (2018, p.4) claim.

Initially, and as discussed earlier, I immersed myself in the field as I attempted to build relationships with some individuals in the environment and more importantly to understand their livelihoods. As a result of the interactions, it was evident that interview was the suitable method of data collection. For starters handling a group for discussion would be a challenge in terms of trust, discipline and unpredictable attendance of the children. Moreover, a self filled survey was a challenge as many interviewees had not attained their primary certificates.

In the qualitative questionnaire, basic information of the interviewees was collected. A few closed questions were asked, in which background information of the interviewee was acquired. The questionnaire will seek to identify one or more factors, domains or variables that influence the child's decision to return to street after reintegration program. The questionnaire had 17 questions in total, in most cases I asked about 8 questions from the written questions as well as probing questions. The questions were there as a guide and ensured that I had exhausted the interview.

When entering the research field, it was evident that choosing the interviewees would be challenging. In order to avoid bias and obtain interviewees that would fit a certain criteria the help of social workers was necessary. The guidelines included boys of ages 18 and below who had been through a reintegration program and returned to the streets thereafter. Two social workers were instrumental in choosing the interviewees. Initially the plan was to interview 5 boys, however after the first two interviews, it seemed appropriate to increase the number of interviewees. This was due to the lack of in-depth and missing answers, as the interviewees were unsure or unresponsive to some probing. The social workers known to the SCC requested the interviewees to assist me, a student who was doing research on street connected children. No child was forced or lured, and all of them were quite positive and curious to participate. In addition, prior to their interviews, each participant gave their oral consent, which was audio recorded and ethical aspects are discussed later in this study.

Great caution in organizing the questionnaire, executing the interviews and analyzing the data was pivotal. During the research there are several factors at play that could influence interview questions, researcher's behavior at field as well as data analysis. The relationships built during field visits and interaction would expose the research to interviewee's beliefs, perspectives, opinions and interpretations of the local resident (Schesul et al, 2012, p.18). Certainly some biases were confronted during field visits, in fact, a more positive and friendly attitude was developed. Further, I gained confidence in interacting with the children and attained some professional insights from observing and talking with social workers.

Finally, objectivity is integral in academic research, with benefits including fairness to interviewees and reliability of results. An aspect that stands out from Schesul et al (2012, p.8) analysis is that researchers should strive to attain objectivity by adopting "a stance of purposeful disinterest in the outcomes of the study". Agreeably, it was essential for the social workers to choose interviewees for me, to reduce my bias.

A relaxed and seemingly trustable interviewer is important to any interview; however for the SCC these aspects are particularly crucial. In addition, drifting away from topics or difficulty in sharing some aspects of their lives was another occurrence and I learned to include affirmative talk when necessary. Laughter seemed to calm situations too, and when necessary laughing at some scenarios seemed to ease the children's demeanor during the interactions.

The interviews were taken between 2nd and 13th of March 2020 at Rafiki drop in center. Two test interviews which allowed me to practice my interview skills evaluate the questionnaire, and ensure full readiness including recording methods was done. The interviews happened outdoors, however, within the premises and a social worker well known to the children was present in all the interviews. The Rafiki center is an enclosed environment, with the main premises on the one end, and a large grassy ground with tress surrounding the compound. Children often chose where they wanted to sit; others seemed to just pick the spots that others had chosen. The social worker was mostly a silent participant, however, she was able to support me and elaborate some of the questions in a manner understandable by the children. She was able to support some of the responses, as children may refer to something they believed I knew.

The social worker known to the children allowed the children to relax and open up, as someone more trusted to them was present. After the test interviews and re-adjustment of the questionnaire, another 9 interviews took place. The test interviews were recorded manually on paper due to my technical unpreparedness. In addition, 8 out of the 9 agreed to audio record their interviews. I took notes of all the interviews and particularly more for the one who did not want to be recorded. The interviews lasted between 13- 25 minutes, with an average of 16mins. In total 11 interviews were done, however, 10 is utilized for analysis as one of the test interviews lacked major points. The other test interview had acceptable answers according to questions asked and thus it has been included in the analysis.

The children were surprisingly specific in their answers. Assumingly, they have had to share some of their life story to the social workers, police, and staff in the reintegration process. There were a few questions that seemed new to them. In addition, the questions regarding some challenging situations or events that redirect everyday living were sometimes difficult to respond to. Some interviewees either took long pauses in thought. Others would reluctantly or without much thought pull on the grass, as we were sitting on the ground, at the drop-in yard. All the interviewees sat until the end of the interviews and no breaks were taken. The

mood was calm and relaxed, there was laughter during the interviews and some interviewees even lied down as they spoke. In essence, the interviews went smoother and faster than I expected. Further, a summary of the basic information of the ten interviewees in this study are presented under appendix 1. Finally, in the next chapter these recordings and notes will be transcribed and the analysis process will be elaborated.

5.3 Thematic Analysis

Naturally, when weighing up a suitable qualitative research analysis method, various aspects are in play. Thematic analysis seems to suit the research question at hand, and the type and amount of data collected. Thematic analysis is integral to qualitative analysis as it can be used as a method on its own, as well as to compliment other qualitative methods (Nowell et al, 2017, p.2). However, in this study this thematic analysis will be utilized as a method. The role of thematic analysis according to (Braun & Clarke, 2006), is to identify, analyze, organize, describe and report on themes of a given data set (Nowell et al, 2017, p.2). For this study, thematic analysis is suitable as it will guide the analysis towards getting perspectives of the respective participants, the difference and similarities within the data as well as the unforeseen outcome (Nowell et al, 2017, p.2). While thematic analysis is important in summarizing the main points of a given datum, like most qualitative methods, thematic analysis allows for a certain level of flexibility, and therefore, researcher must be punctual to coherence and consistency (Nowell et al, 2017, p.2).

In the quest to ensure a rigorous thematic analysis that produces trustworthy and insightful research, Nowell et al (2017) have laid out a six step approach to thematic analysis. Figure 2 below is drawn to clarify the steps and the back and forth process present in the thematic analysis. These steps are utilized to guide the analytic process of the data set of this study. The six steps are data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report comes last.

Figure 2: Thematic Analysis Process used in this study

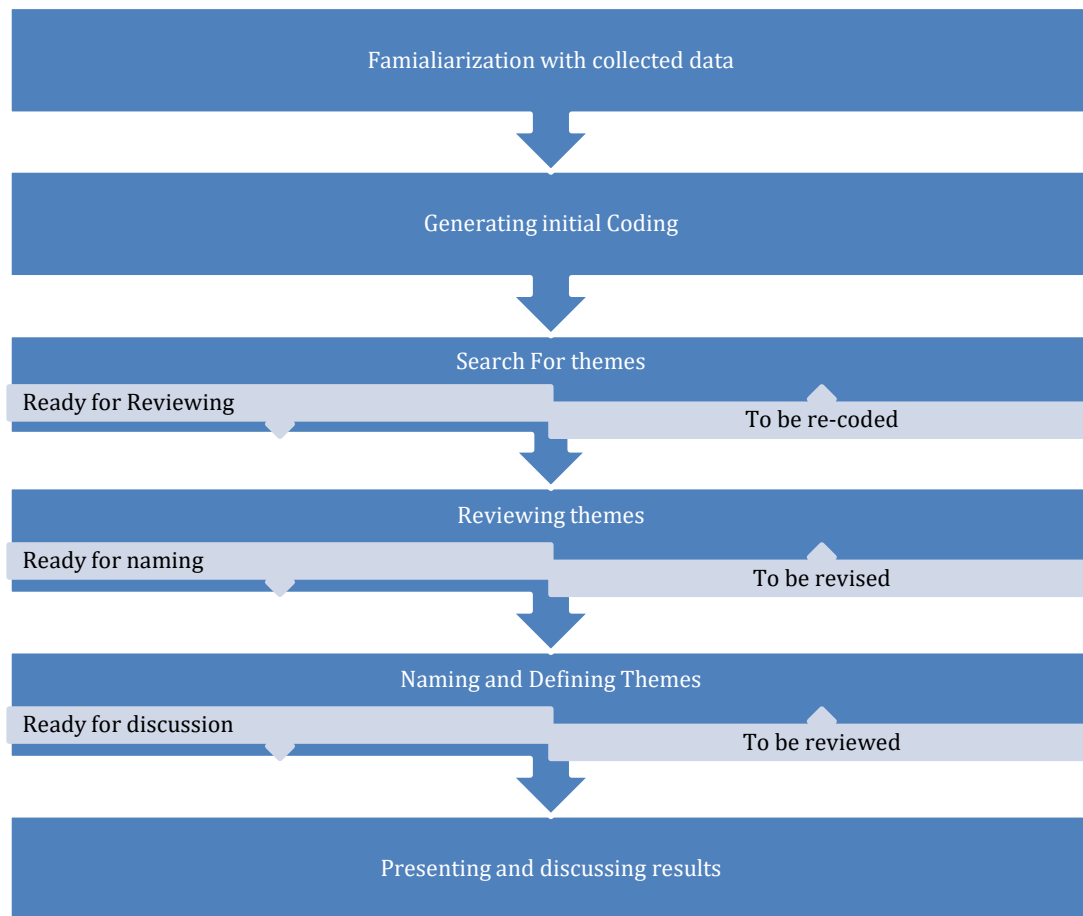


Figure by author

Phase 1: Familiarizing with the Data

In order to familiarize with the data, the researcher should attempt to delve to the depth and breadth of the datum. The researcher should immerse themselves by reading the data repeatedly in an active manner, while watching out for meanings and patterns (Nowell et al, 2017, p.5). Once the transcription was done and the final translations and language adjustments from Swahili to English was observed and the data was ready for analysis, the coding process took place. First, the text was read through and phrases and sentences were color coded according to similarities. At the same time phrases that seemed initially irrelevant to the research question were also marked.

At the course of this phase, realization and acknowledgement of initial thoughts and reflections regarding beliefs, developing theories, and growing insights regarding the research topic can occur. Simultaneously, the researcher can take note of possible coding approach

that can be applied later on (Nowell et al, 2017, p.5). Notably, at this stage, a certain dynamic was in play, as the researcher it was evident that interviewees presented difficult and complex experiences and at the same time there were positive and possible opportunities lingering. After translating and reading through the text, it was evident that the answers to each question were rather similar. The answers were also rather short and precise, which would make it easier to code and subsequently theme.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Coding is quite a popular step in the initial stages of data processing. Leavy (2012, p.584) writes that coding in qualitative data analysis is an act of giving representational meaning to collected information, thus paving the way for further analysis. Initial fabrication of codes takes place by dwelling on the data and focusing on simplifying and indentifying specific features (Nowell et al, 2017, p5). In this process, the researcher will continue to grasps the existing dynamics in the datum, while attentively and systematically exploring each data across the data set (Nowell et al, 2017, p.6).

In this phase, essential parts of the text that are concurrent with the research topic are indentified and marked. Table 1 below gives an example of initial codes and phrases. The researcher should identify the various levels of codes, while being aware that too many levels of codes may challenge the ability to organize and interpret data in a logical manner (Nowell et al, 2017, p.6). Notably, as the codes were generated, gradually, I notice developing repetitive arguments. More concise codes were developed, as well as versatile ones. In general, a code is often “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a partition of language-based or visual data” (Leavy 2012, p. 585). As seen below, some codes such as those under “Host” are more direct and simple to digest, and a story can easily be picked. However, those codes under “provision of services and material,” are more encompassing and require more caution to process.

Table 1: Generating initial codes example

Theme, Definition	Examples of codes
Reason to leave for street	Theft occurred in their neighborhood and two boys were indirectly linked. The police were involved and at the hearing of this both boys left home and are hesitant to return.

	<p>Another child claimed lack of food and violence from the uncle.</p> <p>On the other hand, step mother to one of the boys requested that he leaves home, as he was trouble.</p>
Provision of services and material	<p>Most reintegration programs offer education.</p> <p>However, there is lack of various structures; two boys had to wait for quite a while, as schooling preparations were on the way. The preparations took a longer time so they ended up returning to the streets.</p> <p>Meanwhile, few children who went to reintegration centers reported learning and/or fun activities.</p> <p>Most children have reported good rapport as well as support from intervention social workers, often travelling with them to home or children centers for reintegration.</p> <p>More often social workers have strived to rehabilitate the children with the little resources available.</p>
Host; Family & Staff interactions	<p>Children reported positive interactions with their immediate care giver be it a mother, a grandmother or a brother.</p> <p>Two respondents who went to different reintegration centers argued that all the staffers were friendly except one; the one staffer would beat the children in discipline.</p>

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Once all the data have been coded and assembled, sorting and the theme making process begun. A theme brings portions of related data together to which may seem meaningless individually, however, together they clearly have a connection to the research question (Nowell et al, 2017, p.8). Moreover, unlike codes, themes are expanded phrases or sentences that are directly connected to the data (Leavy, 2012, p.596). Furthermore, the derived themes should cut across all data sets in question. In practice it is a back and forth process between data, codes and other subsets (Bengtsson, 2016, p.12). Essentially, these themes converge and make-up the heart of the findings. Consequently, these findings guide discussions and responses to the research question, as well as to the aims of the study (Frattatoli, 2012, p.228).

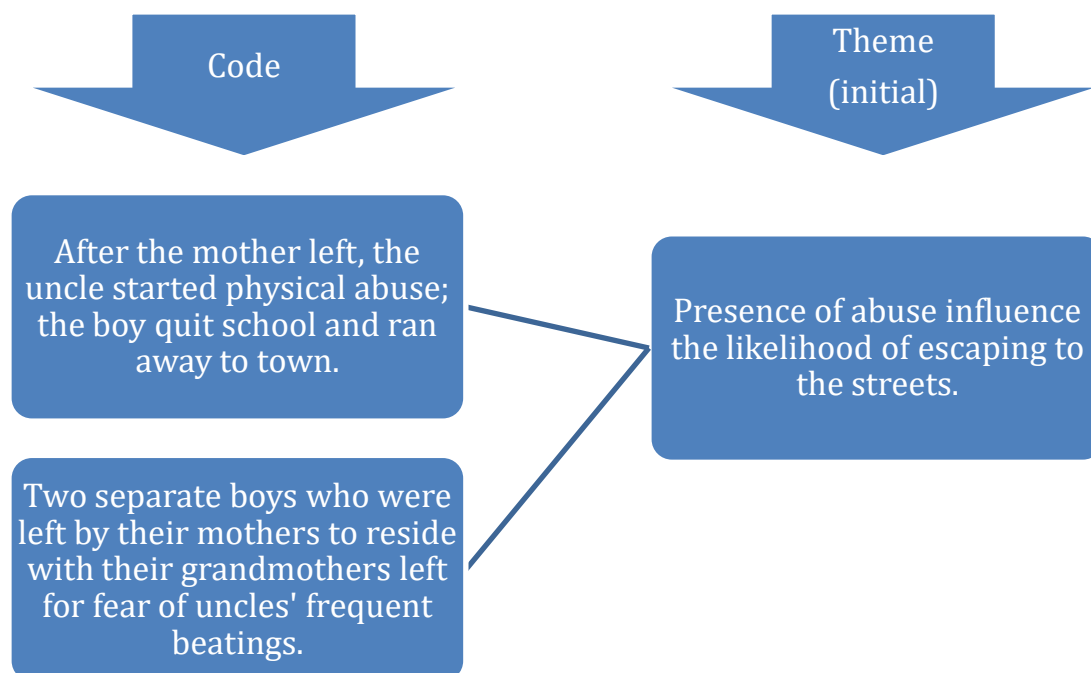
In this study, themes are generated in an inductive manner, maintaining a strong relationship to the data. The flexibility of thematic analysis is an advantage, however, once the method of

determining the themes has been chosen, it is crucial to maintain consistency with the given method (Nowell et al, 2017, p.8).

In the process, I as the researcher was mindful of themes that may not clearly resonate with the research question straight away. In doing so, this study set aside some of the phrases and codes that didn't fit into developing themes, and revisited them in the next phases. Regardless of the methods used to highlight, determine or identify steps in the analysis process, it is paramount that the codes, themes and end results are all rooted in the original data.

Ultimately, a summary table should be created to give an overview of the analysis process and chosen codes, and themes. (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 12) Therefore, in addition to figure two showing examples of initial codes, figure 3 below gives an example of the analysis process from codes to themes.

Figure3. An Example of Themes Making Process



Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

This phase occurred once all themes were set and they were ready for further refinement. Here, I attempted to ensure that all codes have been placed accurately, I considered code by code under each theme, and evaluated each theme to ensure that there was a logical pattern

(Nowell et al, 2017, p.9). In addition, based on the data the themes should work together to tell a general story. According to Leavy (2012, p.596), to theme data in QDA is to “construct summative, phenomenological meanings” by writing up elaborate texts that are reflexive of the data. These texts attempt to summarize the obvious and the hidden meanings of data (Leavy 2012, p.596). Therefore, essentially themes should answer the question “how” that is latently derived from the underlying meaning routed in the data Graneheim & Lundman 2004 (cited in Bengston, 2016, p. 12)

Here each theme was tested for validity by analyzing their link and relevance to the data. At this phase I added codes to cover all essential testimonials and irrelevant or overlapping codes were deleted concurrently. Particularly, I was conscious of the coding and recoding as an ongoing process, and therefore, at this phase I anticipated and responded to possible need to recode. Obtaining themes that “are specific enough to be discrete and broad enough to capture a set of ideas” that are present across the data set was crucial to the process (Nowell et al, 2017, p.9). Finally, my goal was to ensure that, the end results of this phase are themes that are adequately referential and are grounded in the data. Hitherto, the themes that are to be reviewed in the next phase are:

1. Presence of abuse influences the likelihood of escaping to the streets
2. Positive experiences with care givers, except few exceptions
3. Abuse by extended relatives, few staff, & peers, also at government facility
4. Lack of basic needs and structure at home
5. Education available, a times environment un-conducive
6. At reintegration centers, basic needs met, & routines & structures available
7. A future away from the streets, working or studying & family re-union

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes have been identified, their importance and the role they capture should be tabled. Here, the themes should unite to tell a story, and ensure that each theme has a “punchy” and informative name. Here data may overlap, as certain data sets may be present in multiple themes. Further, themes should then be assessed for their relevance to the data set and importantly their relation to the research question. The researcher should ensure that all data that are relevant to the research question are not left out of the themes. Finally, the research should be able to “describe the scope and content of each theme” before moving to

next phases. Also, an audit trail can be done to ensure that themes are well grounded in the data (Nowell et al, 2017, p.10).

Finally, in this analysis, creation of themes has been a challenging task, requiring extensive objectivity and frequent references to the raw data. Themes have been simplified, clarified merged, and phrased in an informative manner. Also, at this phase, stand alone codes and phrases have been incorporated into existing themes and those. Naturally, these themes will influence the discussions as well as the conclusion. Fundamentally, when transparency exists and proper analysis is done, the ability to trace the data backwards, perhaps from themes, through codes should be inevitable. Below are the final themes that will be used to guide and present the findings;

1. Experiences at home, streets,& rescue center (both private and public)
2. Services and materials provided at drop-in centers, home & rescue centers
3. Explicit reasons to escape to streets.
4. Personal preferences

Phase 6: Producing the Report

Once the themes have been exhausted, the final analysis and report writing ensues. According to Nowell et al (2017), the next and final step is to give an interesting account of the data in a concise, coherent, logical and non repetitive manner. The overall process should portray clearly how the findings were developed. At the course of data analysis direct words of the participants are utilized, as they help to explain certain aspects and to show the “prevalence of the themes” (Nowell et al, 2017, p.11). Precisely, to give the reader the real sense of the raw data, parts of original text are embedded in the analysis to convince the reader of the “validity and the merit of the analysis”. To avoid description and shallow depth of the research accounts, at the course of discussion section, I attempt to interpret the findings by “theorizing”, with the support of literature, as I emphasize the importance of arising concepts. Additionally, new knowledge is shared especially under discussion through practical interpretations.

6 Limitations and Strengths

Regardless of efficiency and caution undertaken in any qualitative analysis, to argue total achievement of success and accuracy in the analysis process would be reckless. There are

certain strengths and limitations that can be observed from this study. The time spent prior to interviews allowed the researcher a better understanding of the environment and the research subjects. In fact the interview set-up was influenced by some observations made during field interactions. For instance, the location chosen for the interviews was comfortable and without distractions. Interviewees often visit the Rafiki drop in center, which is serene and segregated from the busy town life. Without this knowledge, perhaps the interviews would have taken place in unfamiliar office locations or in the bases where the children reside, exposing the interviews to different dynamics.

Both of these locations would have presented some dilemmas and opportunities to the data collection process. Hypothetically, if the interviews occurred in the children's own bases, they would have been more relaxed and in touch with their everyday reality, thus some information would have been relayed differently. In addition, if the interviews would have occurred in a closed office, maybe the answers would have been more focused and detailed due to less distracting environment. On the other hand, interviewees may have accepted to be interviewed in efforts to please the staff and myself as they were personally known to us to a certain level.

On the other hand, the interviews were mainly conducted in Swahili. Swahili is the Kenyan national language, and is commonly used by the Street Connected Children. The language was easy to use for both the interviewer and the interviewees; therefore, both parties were able to express themselves comfortably. The downside would be possible errors related to translation of data. During the transcribing process, translation occurred simultaneously. Translation was done word by word, however, in some instances the general concept was registered for clarity and sensibility. In the translation process, the meaning of text may be diluted or the emotions & context attached to the statements may be tampered with. Despite my efforts to remain objective, it is inevitable that some bias and personal point of views may slightly influence the translation of recorded data.

Furthermore, it would have been quite difficult to carry the interviews had I not taken time to understand the environment, how the local language is utilized as well as some characteristics exuded by the children. Similarly, my understanding of the environment and research subjects, could have led me to bias. Possibility to ignore or justify some observations and narratives, and important points that I would observe without the exposure may be left out. In analysis and discussions, it is inevitable that previous exposures will affect my point of

views. Also, the presence of the social worker known to the children brought a different dynamic to the interview. Despite being the silent participant, and supporting the interview when needed, her presence would have elicited unexpected influence. Because, the social worker knows the children's life stories, the children could have been indirectly coaxed to tell the same story and to avoid new information, unknown to the social worker.

The data collected in this study have been solely children's interviews. This allows for the children's insight to respond to the research question. However, a deeper and broad understanding of the scenarios would further concretize possible outcomes. For instance perspectives of caregivers, social workers or staff at the centers would definitely support possible policy or working methods, compared to sole understanding of the children. Moreover, methods such as group interviews or the use of art are possibilities for further inquiry.

7 Findings on Reintegration Experiences of the SCC in Eldoret

The outcomes of this study have been organized into four clusters or themes. In the subsequent paragraphs the themes will be presented and elaborated. These themes represent the experiences of SCC which narrow to reintegration programs. The first theme covers the general experience from streets, child centers, and government premises to their own homes. In sequence, the following theme will explore services and materials offered to children or the lack thereof, as well as children's interactions with different caregivers at reintegration programs. In the third theme, children's own explicit reasons to depart a program or their home are elaborated. Finally, the last theme portrays children's preferences of possible care, resources or support. The preferences are children's personal wishes for a better life & future. Summaries and quotations will be utilized in presenting, supporting and discovering the underlying meanings. The themes will be explained in detail adhering to the research question and thus convincing the reader of its essence in this study.

In this study, all participants have been assigned a code, which eases control of data as well as achieving anonymity. Names, discussions and locations that may identify interviewees have been omitted. The identities of the interviewees are mainly seen as A1, B3 or C5 mainly in the order of interviews and no other meaning. Naturally, the letter "I" stand for interviewee.

7.1 Experiences at home, streets, and rescue centers (private and public)

This theme has been included in the results not so much as an answer to the research question but to pave way for the other three themes and to give a picture of the street life and other encounters. From the interviews, it was evident that the lives of the SCC in question are not so much mundane. Instead there are several interactions and experiences with varying parties that definitely influenced their perception of life and subsequent decisions. Foremost, most of these interviewees have experienced some conflict or instability of some kind starting from home. As noted in the basic data, all of the interviewees have a single mother background. Four of the 10 interviewees were cared for by relatives, 3 of them by grandmother and one by elder brother. The experiences discussed here are geared towards moments before reintegration program, during varying forms of reintegration programs as well as after reintegration programs. While on the streets, the interviewees reported encounters with strangers who wished to help them. Most of the strangers offered to pay transport for the children to return home. One of the well wishers had offered to help one of the boys return back to school and another offered some employment.

More often, the children reported positive relationships with immediate hosts, be it a relative or staff at the private rescue centers. Despite challenges present in the environment, for instance the lack of resources or challenges with other relationships, the children were happy to be at their reintegration location. One example is of a now 18 year old who had been re-integrated back home and stayed with his grandmother. He described his situation like this:

... "I stayed with grandma but I was not going to school, instead I was doing gigs. You always woke up early to work in the field before returning home. It was nice to sleep at home. B1"

On the contrary, abuse and unfriendly behavior seems to be familiar experience of these children, be it at home or integration center. Generally, the perpetrators of abuse are those persons caring for the children or those present in their habitual environment. Three children reported family members who were unfriendly and demanded that the children leave their home. Moreover, three out of ten children, reported abuse by fellow children undergoing rehabilitation or training. The abuse was done either in the form of verbal bullying or direct physical hitting. One child pointed out that

“If you escaped and returned, all the fellow children would beat you first before the teachers.” ... “Those children called themselves bees, because of how they attacked” (C6).

Secondly, despite some children having relatives or neighbors present in the streets, while at reintegration programs, all except one child reported having no contact with them. Essentially, all children reported that they had no contact with the streets while undergoing reintegration. Children feared that they would get beaten if they returned to their reintegration centers. In fact, children’s movements were limited at the reintegration centers, and compared to home children reported being able move around and even engage in menial jobs.

On the other hand, children re-integrated to home setting were not in contact with their street acquaintances. Their reintegration homes are far from the streets (towns), so the reason for lack of contact is unclear whether it was due to lack of communication tools, means to visit or general disinterest. Finally, Most of the children reported that the desire to sniff glue during reintegration existed. However, they all agreed that it did not trigger or influenced any of their decisions to return to the streets.

This lack of outside contact didn’t seem to bother the children. In fact for those who didn’t have staff or host problems, they reported general contentment at the reintegration center. One interviewee (C6) claimed that in addition to routines, they had “nice outings” and despite restrictions to leave the premises alone, he was quite happy with the operation of the center.

Thirdly, nine out of the ten didn’t like living on the streets. Only one interviewee was happy to live on the streets as he claimed to have been through a lot of abuse in other rescue locations. Most children narrated the painful lack of place to rest or food to eat. In addition, they lamented the manner in which the general public referred to or treated them. Two children described that

“It is not nice on the streets, because sometimes you lack something to eat and bad things often catch up with you” B3. The unprecedented negative treatment by vendors or the police especially at night was well underlined by the children...

“Life on the streets is not good, sometimes they chase you, like yesterday someone stole a phone. Then the young ones are in trouble. The older ones have homes to stay at night, so at night the problem is on us, we get beaten” C4.

Bad experiences with the police and at the government rescue centers were further emphasized. All children agreed that the police were unfriendly at the streets as well as at the government rescue centre. Often the police would round them up unexpectedly, and without consent drive them to the government rescue center. In the process, the children would get beaten and told that they were for example thieves or little criminals. One child describes the situation like this:

....the police got me and took me to the government rescue center. There, it is just problems, no food. The guards there don't have good hearts, they beat you sometimes. Sometime we work in the greenhouses, move some dirt or play" C1.

The private rescue centers have some form of routine; however, according to the interviewees no real long term plan was in place. In addition, the private reintegration centers were more receptive as most staffers were conducive. In contrast, the most profound memory of the children regarding government rescue centers is the abuse received from the police and staffers. Eight out of ten children who have been to the government rescue center reported beatings and cruel treatments. In addition to abuse, children reported that at the government rescue center there is lack of sufficient basic needs (food, hygiene), lack of personal space, and lack of organized activities as well as compulsory cleaning of shared spaces, partaking in general chores and menial labor at the farm. One child described;

"I have been to the government rescue center, the tea is watery and they like to beat, you can easily get sick even when you were healthy before. If you ask for more food you will get a beating" C2.

7.2 Provisions & treatment at Home and Drop in & Rescue Centers

Effectively, services and resources available to the children are essential in understanding how they have experienced their stay at home or reintegration centers. Care and interactions with caregivers and individuals in the environment plays a vital role in overall experience of the reintegration program. The questions that played a major role under this theme were: *how was your interaction with the host and/or staff? And what services and materials were well offered/ not well offered?* All of the reintegration centers offered schooling. However, they reported some lack of structure or perhaps resources regarding home reintegrations. For instance two children had to wait for quite a while at home, while schooling preparations

were on the way. Unfortunately, during the waiting period they returned to streets before joining school. Meanwhile, few children who went to reintegration centers reported learning, and/ or fun activities as well as lack of access to the outside world. Children are encouraged to remain within the premises and not to exit, unless for programs organized by the center.

Furthermore, most children have reported good rapport as well as support from intervention social workers. The social workers have often travelled with them to their home or children centers for reintegration. More often social workers have strived to rehabilitate the children with the little resources available. At the reintegration centers children mostly received basic needs such as clothing, food, shelter & healthcare. In sum, four of the ten interviewees revealed problems related to food, the rest were content with food provision or paid little attention to the fact. Food scarcity was reported often at home. However, poor quality of food was reported at the children centers. Referring to a reintegration center

... "We didn't have enough food; we only got one bean and corn meal" (C3). Another interviewee who relocated home to stay with grandmother narrated that... "We didn't always get something to eat" (B1).

In general, one positive aspect of the reintegration program has been the hosts. Children reported positive interactions with their immediate care giver be it a mother, a grandmother or a brother. In addition, staff at the reintegration centers received positive feedback with some few exceptions. The exceptions pertains four interviewees. Two interviewees who went to different reintegration centers argued that all the staffers were friendly except one; the one staffer would beat the children as a discipline method. On the other hand, one child who lived with the brother and another who lived with the grandmother reported verbal abuse and possible physical abuse from their respective uncles. One boy escaped back to the streets for fear of getting beaten.

7.3 Explicit Reason to Escape to the Streets

The first two themes have given a picture of how children have experienced the streets as well as services available to them. Under this theme we present children's explicit reasons for leaving the reintegration center or home after reintegration. The main question within this theme was "*how did you decide to leave home or reintegration program?*" Therefore, these

are children's last moments of decision making, before exiting the programs. According to the answers given by the children, all reasons for leaving home or reintegration program seemed to be external or unavoidable circumstances. Reasons for children living in the reintegration centers differed to those who went home for reintegration. For the boys who re-integrate at home, most of their reasons were due to either accusation or abuse of some kind. Two boys left after theft occurred in their neighborhood and both were indirectly linked. The police were involved and after hearing this, both boys left home and were hesitant to return, he claimed that;

"His big brother caught both of us, and accused both of us of the stealing. So I was afraid and left." (B3)

Yet again another child claimed lack of food and violence from the uncle led to his escape back to the streets.

In another situation, step mother to one of the boys requested that he goes away as he was trouble. Another instance concerned a caregiver who was a drunk and often quarreled. Similarly, two other separate boys who were left by their mothers to reside with their grandmothers left for fear of uncles' frequent beatings. The decision to move to the streets was the obvious move for them, as the boys easily noted that; "what else would they do?"

In contrast, those children who have been in children's reintegration centers have had varying but often similar reasons for departing the program. Out of the ten reintegrations, four children have been to the children centers for reintegrations. All of them had varying reasons to leave, in fact one boy claimed to have left for no apparent reason. The other boy left as one staffer used to beat them. Further, the third child left the children's home as they used to have police like guards coming in and out due to large numbers of the children. That child narrated that he left as

... "There were guards who called themselves Rhino, they were very bad. So I couldn't stay in the city" (C5).

This particular child did not only escape the government rehabilitation center in Nairobi, but left the town altogether as he feared getting captured and returned to the center. The fourth child escaped reintegration center after hearing his brother had died, and again feared to return due to possible accusation, despite his desire to be in the center.

7.4 Personal Preferences for the Future

The essence of this last paragraph is a synopsis of the children's wishes now that they have all returned to the streets. Few of these children were already working on leaving the streets once again, with the help of Rafiki social workers. The main question for this theme was *"what is an ideal possible program or arrangement for you moving forward?"* Some have wished to leave the streets and join a reintegration pathway, yet there weren't enough resources or desired locations to rehabilitate them. All children reported that they wished for further education or training. In summary all interviewees, except one wished to leave the streets for schooling. The one interviewee, however, was quite afraid to return to school or reintegration center, claiming possible beating. For this reason, he preferred the streets. Nevertheless, the other nine interviewees termed life on the streets difficult and not good. In fact during the reintegration period none of them wished to return to the street life. In addition, some children wished to return home, however at the thought of circumstance that let them to leave for streets they wished otherwise, one boy noted that;

...*"I don't mind returning home but my stepmother is still there"* (B2).

On the other hand, those kids who have been through reintegration centers wished to return the same centers. They noted that in the centers they have food, clothing and basic needs. Of course others wished not to return to the previous reintegration center, however, they were willing to enroll in a different center. Similarly, others hesitated returning to the same center for fear of beating. Nevertheless they were hopeful, that they would get support to return to school in one way or the other. One child has wished to be relocated far from the streets. Another wished the same and perhaps to remain far from the cousin who brought him to the streets. Yet another narrated that;

...*"I would like to go somewhere far from here, where I can study and no street friends"* (A1).

8 Discussion

The interviews and subsequent data description have generated several understandings of the children's experience in and out of the streets. In the quest to understand why SCC flee

reintegration programs return to the streets, further examination of the data is necessary. This chapter will attempt to comment and make interpretations of the previously presented themes. Three ideas that arose from the findings namely care (caregivers), resources, and children's agency is discussed. First, children's narration mainly focused on the role of caregivers and care in place. Secondly, the availability and the lack of various resources and subsequent impact were largely discussed. Thirdly, the children's perceptions and role in the first two ideas and their life in general is essential for implication and practice. In practice, logical arguments will be pointed out and relationships between data will be identified. Discussion will commence from the opening theme and percolated down to the last theme, often interweaving between the themes. Naturally, qualitative research often bears perceptions and emotions of individuals (Nowell et al, 2017; Bengston, 2016). Thus the nature of responses, often guides to characterize experiences or products as well as or estimation of phenomenon. Probable answers to the research question will therefore distinguish some influencing factors.

8.1 Resources

From the inception of the interviews, it has been apparent that resources and the lack thereof have remained recurrent. In their responses children, sparingly reported departing some program from the lack of resources. Nevertheless, it is evident that the lack of resources has caused some despair and anxiety and perhaps plays a role in ultimate decision making. Major resource discrepancies can lead to inability to carry sufficient reintegration progress, especially when returning home. Furthermore, the quality of food items has been of children's concern in some centers, as well as, scarce supply of food especially at home. In his analysis of humanistic approaches for care, Schimmel (2008, p.219) acknowledges that outreaches with SCC have been challenging due to inadequate "financial and human resource".

Conversely, food is a basic need for any human being the lack thereof can lead to unprecedented results. It is not necessary for the children to spell out that the lack of food led them to leave the program. However, it can be argued that it has an influence on human habits and decisions. An arguable point is the weight it has on the decision making, especially as most of the children have not reported severe lack of food on the streets. One scenario is that the children preferred the streets as they were able to get food or even use substances which are known to curb food craving (Hollingsworth, 2018). What is more grave,

is that the holistic approaches that are necessary for a successful rehabilitation when approaching children transitioning from street connected life cannot be achieved, when even the basic needs are not met. A trend that is recurrent in developing countries and programs with limited resources, is that they foremost address food and indispensable needs such as shelter, clothing and healthcare. Once these needs have been met, the subsequent essentials such as education, recreation and artistic expressions (Schimmel 2008, pp.216-217.) among other activities are introduced. Thus the outcome is often minimal quality of care for all SCC and lack of tailored and holistic care that is paramount (Schimmel, 2008, p. 217).

Furthermore, the data reveals that resources that allow for better reintegration programs might have been limited. It is noted that, as children prepare for reintegration, in the earlier stages they may still commute between street life and drop in centers. The interviewed children completely discouraged the readily available government centers due to the lack of sufficient food and inhumane treatments. The SCC are similar to any child in their quest for basic needs, agency, love, care and so on. Schimmel (2018, p.218) notes that in this regard their habitual spaces should elude colors, lighting and physical features that embrace and celebrate their “individual dreams and hopes”. He further emphasizes that programs reaching out to these children should strive for personalized care that “deinstitutionalized the atmosphere of shelters and transitional housing for children, which often feel sterile and cold”. What is evident in Eldoret town is lack of sufficient children centers to accommodate those children who have agreed to engage in rehabilitation. Available spaces are situated in the government center, though the children have described it as lacking basic needs and abuse is inevitable.

The trend continues as the children transfer to their homes. At transfer, children have reported having to stay at home without going to school due to lack of school related finances. As stipulated in the CRC, Kenya has made sure that primary education is compulsory, a right and free for all. Nevertheless, attending school is more than school fees. It is the means of transport, clothing, proper shelter, care and support. The social workers are forced to make this difficult decision, especially when the children are ready to return to their respective homes. They are forced to re-integrate the children to the same homes they had run away from without making great changes to resources availability. To this end, Schimmel (2008, p.216) reciprocates on this occurrence that, despite the availability of caregivers who often care and ensure the whereabouts of the children, sadly “the intrinsically volatile, transient,

and economically impoverished nature of street life makes such interventions far from sufficient”.

Given enough resources, caregivers should be empowered and trained and provided with possible financial support to ensure basic needs are met. Ager goes further and establishes the importance of monitoring and evaluating children who have been outside home care. He notes that, if protecting these children is a priority of the program then it is essential to construct what works, how and where. In this vein, “monitoring and evaluation has to be treated as an integral part of programming by policy-makers, donors, and services and, most importantly, results must be communicated” (Ager, 2012, p. 740). Further, these attempts should evidently be done in a manner that is helpful to the children. From this research, it was evident that the children wished for a better life and based on their previous experiences on reintegration, information can be gathered and utilized for future attempts.

In comparison, children at the centers have opposite experiences, as often foodstuffs were available albeit the low quality. Additionally, children admitted that at the reintegration centers they have the possibility to attend school right away. In sequence, some of the challenges they face in reintegration centers compared to home set-up are seen in the following paragraphs. In retrospect, perhaps lack of family connection may induce children’s instability in this regard. An aspect to peck in future studies of this manner. Essentially, with availability of resources and structures, reintegration should be set out progressively, considering the age of the child, their needs and upcoming matters while ensuring support measures are in place and regular follow-ups (UN, 2010, p.17) thus fostering a successful implantation.

8.2 Care (& caregivers)

The interviewees have reported varying experiences with caregivers, staff and government officers. Evidently there have been similarities between children who were re-integrated back home and those who were taken to reintegration centers. In both environments, children have report mixed kinds of relationships. For purposes of reintegration and prior to placement, reasonable communication between the child and their family should be in place and guided by experts (UN, 2010, p. 10). Perhaps if such attempts would have been made cautiously, following instances would have been capitalized or avoided accordingly.

Foremost, some staffers or family members exuded positive attitude towards the children. Contrastingly, extended family members have been reported to have negative attitudes towards the children and often acting in accordance. It is the responsibility of authorities to warrant that no child is exposed to “torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (UN, 1989, p. 10). In fact article 37 forbids any form of capital punishment. Nonetheless, further studies should be done to scrutinize the accuracy of these claims made by the children regarding care and treatment in public and private centers. In doing so, discussion towards program improvements can be elicited.

Similarly, it is evident in the data that some staff members have acted unconstructively towards the children. The so called staff would often apply corporal punishment and discipline. In retrospect, the foundation for Carl Rogers’s humanistic theory is the care offered by caregivers. He argued that “unconditional positive regard” should be given to all human beings for a healthy human development. In his analysis of this theory, Schimmel (2008) notes that if this regard should be applied to all human beings, how much more should SCC “who have suffered from extreme psychic and physical vulnerability at a young age and whose lives have been marked by severe emotional deprivation” deserve it. He emphasizes the immediate need for caregivers to support and empower the children in a “ positive direction by demonstrating to them in the most tangible way that their lives matter, that they are significant individuals, bearers of and deserving of dignity, love and respect” (Schimmel 2008, p.219.)

Generally children have reported good relationships and interaction with the hosts and staff in the reintegration program. The deal breaker for many children often referred to one individual who would use corporal form of discipline. The ambiguity is whether every reintegration center should have one disciplinarian of this manner or it has been a coincidence. In this seam, other interviewees have reported beatings from fellow children. One child reported that this was his reason for escaping the training center that he really likes. In other circumstances it is evident that some interviewees are reluctant to return to their previous centers due to fear of beatings by fellow children.

In perspective, it appears that these kinds of abuse played a major role in the children’s decision to leave respective programs. In summary, these children implied that they have found the private reintegration centers tolerable, except the presence of abuse. In further analysis Schimmel (2008) elaborates that humanistic approaches should be central to

strategies used by caregivers and other workers in quest to support them rediscover “self-dignity and to empower themselves” In his perspective street children’s “need” for an environment that is distant from the streets for purposes of restoring and healing physical, psychological, and emotional wellbeing is unquestionable. A safe and caring environment is essential as well as holistic techniques that are tailored to individuals needs (Schimmel, 2008, p.217).

Additionally, the background information collected during the interviews reveals that all the children came from a single mother background. Street children in Kenya often come from a single mother headed homes (Aptekar & Ciano-Federoff, 1999, p.44). To expound the matter, some of the children were taken care of by relatives, and in those cases; they had no contact with either parent. Lack of proper caregiver can exasperate children’s instability (Schimmel, 2008, p.218). Thus during reintegration back at home, those children who lived with their grandmother or sibling had surrounding relatives disapprove of their return. It is essential to emphasize the possibility of “emotional or physical” abuse from blood relatives, therefore attachment & trauma theory or therapeutic methods may be integrated into reintegration plan (Shrader-Mcmilla and Herrera, 2016, p.230). Despite good interaction and relations with hosts, the children were threatened by their uncles. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, no child should be exposed to illogical and harmful occurrences that would affect “his or her honor and reputation” (UN, 1989, p. 5). Similarly, for fear of beating from the uncles, children escaped back to the streets. According to Ager, caregivers should be well trained so as to be able to follow, examine and report on the needs of these vulnerable children. In fact the responses of these caregivers can give first hand insights to the downsides and victories of the given approaches. Therefore, caregivers that are well informed and supported have the potential to create a “strong, adaptable and effective child protection system” (Ager, 2012, p.738).

Similarly, the aspect of to what extent the host parents or relatives have been sensitized, trained or supported by the social workers has not been explored in this research. However, according to narrations surrounding family interactions, grandparents and relatives have frequently appeared in everyday life situations. UN alternative care guidelines recognize that “in most countries, the majority of children without parental care are looked after informally by relatives” (2010, p.3). In agreement Shrader-McMillan and Herrera (2016, p.229) note that a phased reintegration which begins with visits to the family to understand why the children left in the first place is crucial. In sequence, follow-ups are necessary to ensure

problems that arise after reunifications are handled, as the family and the child reacquaint themselves. One interviewee was returned to live with his brother, and others to live with grandmothers. Possible assistance and guidance should be present for those siblings willing to remain together at home in the absence of both parents and both the elder sibling is willing and capable to lead (UN, 2010, p.8). It begs the question as to whether the brother or grandmothers have the necessary structures to sustain a youngster. As the need for training has been established, Ager (2012, p.738) in his study of various programs established that training for care-givers should be on going and is “needed beyond the completion of the training”. This should perhaps imply possible “training” or support for the grandparent, parents and relatives responsible for the children’s accountability.

8.3 Children’s Agency

Through background inquiry, children exposed reasons as to why they left their original homes towards a life on the street. Their actions indicate that children are capable of making decisions and changes in their environment (Kaime-Atterhög, 2012, p.10). Children mainly left due to challenges at home such as lack of resources & care as well as presence of abuse. In most cases the life at home seemed unbearable and life on the street seemed a reasonable alternative. One study of street children in Nairobi, Kenya revealed that children left home for various reasons, which at a glance are objective. Mainly, children resorted to the streets for lack of an alternative way of life, whereas others were on the streets in quest to work and support their families. Similarly, others left due to hunger or peer influence (Onyango et al, 1991, p.19). Therefore, in this perspective children truly are active agents of their life

The closing theme of the results introduced us to the hopes and wishes of the children. As illustrated, nine of the ten interviewees wished to continue with education either at home or in reintegration centers. Stipulating that these children justly wanted to remain in their respective reintegration programs, it is rational that this understanding remains precedent as we explore the outcomes. Article 39 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; imply that reintegration should occur in a setting that will promote “health, self-respect and dignity of the child”. It stipulates that all necessary attempts should be made to boosting healing and reintegration of children who have been victims of any kind of “neglect, exploitation or abuse” (UN, 1989, p.11).

Lalor (1999, p.16), in her study of street children in Ethiopia, find that SCC reported negative experiences of the street and most of them wished for positive prospective future. The results of this study, resonates with this fact. The interviewees of this study wished for a better future away from the streets, and 90% of them did not want to live on the streets. Guidelines for reintegration by the UN specify that prior to reintegration; assessment by a capable professional is required. The professional should be able to include multidisciplinary input and other actors inclusive of the child, family or alternative care giver. Thus a tailored and well thought plan that focuses on the best interest of the child should be drafted and tasks set in writing and agreed on by all concerned (UN, 2010, p.10). In this study children have explicitly shown the desire to cooperate in the reintegration process. Evidently, these children have pointed out various practical and physical aspects that have hindered their successful integration. These inputs should be tangibly utilized to further improve and support reintegration processes in the given programs. Caregiver and social workers as well as other stakeholder's inputs should be addressed and combined for a productive conclusion.

Beyond a safe environment, well trained and supported caregivers with essential resources at their disposal should be able to care, guide and love the children in their jurisdiction. Naturally, these actors should gain the trust of the children, which will allow for collaborative relationships. In this study, some children managed to be linked to theft while undergoing reintegration at home. These children claim to have been innocent, albeit their relations to the main culprit. Once the police were involved, the children feared that their innocence may not be proved. Due to previous experiences with police, it was natural for them to depart for fear of police mistreatment. Clearly, these children did not trust that the caregivers at their disposal would be able to support them through the given accusation. Further, it is not clear whether the caregivers did not possess skills and resources to support or they too believed the accusations were true. Regardless, the end result is unfavorable for the already vulnerable child.

The UN guidelines for alternative care of vulnerable children specify that attempts to keep children with their parents should be a priority. In practice, all possible efforts and resources should be aimed at supporting family members, thus allowing them to retain the child. These are families whose environments have been affected for example by disability, drug and alcohol misuse, as well as discrimination” (2010, p.10). Similarly, the guidelines recognize that in most countries, a good amount of these vulnerable children are cared for informally by relatives. Thus, responsible authorities should reciprocate the given guidelines to ascertain

that the welfare and protection of the children is achieved. In relevance to this study, the guidelines further elaborates that “no child should be without the support and protection of a legal guardian or other recognized responsible adult or competent public body at any time” (UN 2010, p.10). Naturally, all decisions and processes should be to serve the best interest of the child in the short and long term and their rights to be upheld.

9 Practicalities

9.1 Ethics

Essentially, ethical contact plays a major role in this research. If the research is to contribute to practice, objectivity is integral and it should be seen throughout the process of research questions, data collection, analysis, discussions. Secondly the process has been of high integrity both in relation to stakeholders, interviewees (especially as they are a vulnerable group), and institutional advisers.

After my thesis supervisor approved the thesis plan, the steps to the get consent from relevant parties and informed consent from the children ensued. I went to the National Children’s Department for Uasin Gishu County, located in Eldoret town for consent. The consent was given after a letter from my supervisor was presented. At the Rafiki center, social workers requested the children to participate freely with no obligation. The social workers informed the children of the purpose and scope of the interview. Because of the SCC lack of exposure to reading and working with written documents, I felt that the children may find the process of signing a consent document confusing and perhaps intimidating. Therefore, I explained the consent details to each interviewee in simple terms. I informed them about the aim of the study, the kind of questions I was going to ask and how their information will be processed and utilized. An opportunity to decline the interview, ask questions, make suggestions was given. Further, I asked whether they would accept voice recording and all except one agreed to be recorded.

One possible ethical breach is that the social workers during my entering the field period introduced me as a student following their everyday activities and not necessarily as a research student. Of course over 200 children that I came across during that period weren’t part of the interview, however, those who were part of the interview should have had the right to know my intentions from right away and not further on. This remains a challenging

situation for research, as; such disclosure perhaps would have affected the children's attitude and interactions with me.

In addition, confidentiality regarding both the interviewees and stakeholders has been considered crucial. For example concealing of interviewee's identity as well as not revealing stakeholders' information without permission. Further, discrimination from the interviewer was avoided by allowing the social workers to choose the interviewees. Guidelines on how to choose interviewees was given to the social workers in advance. Factors to consider included age, experiences and ability to communicate to certain extend.

9.2 Integrity and Reliability

It is indeed my intention to conduct the data collection and analysis of this research within the framework of academic regulations and integrity. Each step that has been conducted in this process of data analysis is outlined to conform to the principles referenced throughout this study. In addition, this study strives to maintain scientific methodology guidelines, thus rendering this study the credibility it requires. Data collection and analysis of this study have been within this continuum.

9.3 Transparency

All procedures have been discussed and shared truthfully and openly throughout this thesis document. Stakeholders have been honestly and fully informed on the scope and extend of the research.

10 Conclusion

The SCC phenomenon continues to be a challenge and a growing dilemma within global social development. The street connected children phenomenon in Kenya has exasperated even further and measures to curb the matter have been overwhelmed. The foundation for this study was the quest to understand why children return to the streets after they have undergone reintegration programs in Eldoret, Kenya. Through children's insights, the study attempts to get personal views on various reintegration programs experienced by the SCC. Underlying aim is to initially obtain knowledge of the children's experience that can be categorized into practices, interactions, structures and point of views. Subsequently, these experiences are discussed and analyzed to understand the scope of the efficiency as well as ineffectiveness of

those reintegration programs. Finally, the results and discussions give input towards policy and practice implications.

Explicitly, four themes which comprises of experiences, personal interactions, treatment & future desires have been established. First, children's experiences at home, streets or program centers are clarified. Secondly, the availability or scarcity of basic resources at home, streets or rescue center is integral to daily living. Thirdly, explicit reasons to depart from the reintegration program are illuminated. Finally and optimistically children's future dreams and desires.

In general, children reported positive relationships with immediate hosts, be it a relative or staff at the private rescue centers. Nevertheless, children testified that there has been abuse by fellow children. In addition, children had poor experience with the police along with grim encounters at government centers that host the SCC. Similarly children were reluctant to return to reintegration programs after quitting for fear of abuse. Nonetheless, they were happy to be re-integrated and despite desire to sniff glue, they had no desire to visit the streets. In fact the children disliked living in the streets for lack of security, food and shelter.

Secondly, all centers were able to provide schooling, basic food and some form of daily routines and structures. On the contrary, home settings were deprived of these same provisions. Unfortunately, during reintegration to home, some children lacked necessary resources needed to attend schooling, which led to their return back to the streets.

Nevertheless, children gave positive remarks regarding social workers despite scarce resources at their disposal. Generally staff members and immediate care givers at home we reported to be decent with few exceptions. Thirdly, Children motivation for departing from home or reintegration programs appeared to be external or unavoidable circumstances. Generally, children left for fear of physical abuse by relatives, staffers and others in the environment, again with few exceptions.

Finally, despite the lack of adequate rehabilitation centers and resources, unanimously, children dreamed of a future away from streets. They wished to be enrolled in an educational institution, training program or plugged into employment. Particularly, and according to the children street life was challenging and detrimental. Similarly, feasible reluctance for some to return to previous reintegration centers or home was apparent. Equally, others were eager to repatriate back home or to previous reintegration centers.

Clearly, the experiences of street children in this setting are poignant and complex to say the least. The experiences at home, street and reintegration centers illustrate positive aspects and areas that definitely require development. In Summary, The social workers in this situation are performing fairly well with few exceptions. Perhaps, there is a need for training and resources to foster their abilities. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the police officers, including some governmental structures that are in place to tackle SCC challenges. Similarly, staffers and family members require training, collaboration, support and empowerment so as to cohabit with the children better.

Essentially, this study has expanded understanding of the street children and subsequent reintegration attempts in Eldoret, Kenya. Their experience allowed for a discussion which narrows down to the significance of resources, the impact of caregivers and the agency of the child in question. There is a need to improve the availability of resources towards holistic reintegration programs as well as to allow a decent standard of living that is acceptable for children. The caregivers require further training and empowerment to be able to serve the children diligently. Finally, children should be viewed and treated as active agents of their own lives, and in practice their views and wishes should be included in their reintegration plans. Luckily, these children have some positive encounters and their hope for a brighter future is quite alive. Matter fact, there is great need for researchers to attempt further studies that focus on the views of the children in this geographical location. More so, the need for studies that attempt to evaluate practices that implicate policy in the region cannot be emphasized enough. Optimistically, this study will encourage both endeavors.

Similar to Young and Barret (2001) this study found ethnographic methods “particularly useful in gaining access both to the children and street life”. In sequence it has somehow produced “critical tales' ' (Gigengack, 2016, p. 267) which are the narratives of street children's livelihoods that portray purpose and having their own agency. Moreover, despite popular homogenous studies on street children that often inform global journals Conticini (2008), this study has been contextual in nature, mirroring the benefits indicated by Lubaale (2016). The findings resonate perhaps with those children in Eldoret that have undergone similar life pathways with interviewees. Nevertheless, children on the street remains a global concern, certain facts in the above results can be applied across the board.

Evidently this study has been influenced by some theories and perspectives presented in the literature review. Amantana (2011) calls for research that conveys reality through careful

listening and understanding of children in question. Conticini (2008) challenges researchers to demonstrate studies that represent children's dreams and aspirations as well as program evaluations that implicates. Barnes et al (2018) resonates that children's experiences and evaluations are core to research and policy development. Congruently, this study has strived to attain the experiences of the children of reintegration programs, thus informing practice. The children's experiences of structures, practitioners, government officials, and family have allowed for a discussion that implicates practice.

Finally, children's decision to leave for streets is highly linked to poverty. During reintegration to home, practitioners must ensure that, at the least basic needs are met, perhaps sustainably. Holistic approach to children's cases is crucial to practice. Children's life situation, experiences, desires and dreams are linked to their family, culture, faith, education, economy, politics as well as geographical location. These aspects need to be examined when approaching every individual child and their plan towards reintegration. Finally, inter-agency collaboration cannot be stressed enough. Collaboration between government officials (legal, social, police etc), NGOs, family, the child and other entities such as Faith Based Organizations is inevitable in attempting to keep the children off the streets.

For future studies, a dynamic approach would widen the horizon of the outcomes. Therefore, it will be beneficial to get the perspectives of practitioners, police officers, the public, family members etc. Other methods to validate or discount any allegations made by the children is crucial, perhaps utilizing other methods such as group interviews, quantitative questionnaire, repeated interviews. Furthermore, Conticini (2008) notes that there are limited studies that link youngster's studies to economics, sociology and anthropology. Perhaps, what are also required are interdisciplinary studies that respond to shortcomings of specialization.

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12 **Appendix 1:** Basic information on interviewees: N=10

<i>Age-ID</i>	<i>Description(note: all interviewees had a single mother background)</i>
14-C2	He has 4 years of primary education. Had a step-father caregiver and currently no contact with relatives. No sibling, neighbor or relative on the street. He has stayed on streets of five towns. He stayed on integration program for 5 months and few weeks at home before returning to the streets.
14-C4	He has 5 years of primary education. He has not been cared for by a relative and has no current contact with a relative. He has a big brother on the streets and he has stayed in integration for 3 years before returning to the streets. He has stayed on the streets of two towns.
14-C6	He has 6 years of primary education and has had a relative caregiver in the past. He has no current contact with relatives, though he has a neighbor living on the streets. He has lived on the streets of two towns and has stayed for two weeks only in an integration program.
15-C5	Has no recollection of the level of education. He has not had a relative caregiver, and no current contact with any relatives. He has no known relatives or acquaintances living on the streets and has lived in the streets of two towns. He stayed for 1 year in his integration.
16-C1	He has 2 years of primary education. He has had a relative caregiver, and has an active contact with his father. He has a cousin living on the streets, and has lived in Eldoret town only. He has stayed in an integration program for 2 days only.
17-C3	Has had 7 years of primary education. He has had neither previous relative caregiver, nor current contact with a relative. He has lived on the streets of 3 towns and has spent 3 years in an integration program.
17-1A	Has had 3 years of primary education. He has had neither previous relative caregiver, nor current contact with a relative. He has lived on the streets of 2 towns and has spent 3 years in an integration program.

18-B1	Has no recollection of the level of education. He has had a relative caregiver, and has an active contact with his mother& father. He has no neighbor, friend or relative the streets, and has lived in 3 towns. He has re-integrated to home for 1 week only.
18-B2	He has 2 years of primary education. He has not had a relative caregiver, but has an active contact with his brother. He has another brother living on the streets, and has lived in 3 towns. He has re-integrated to home 2 months.
18-B3	He has 4 years of primary education. He has not had a relative caregiver, but has an active contact with his mother. He has a sister living on the streets, and has lived in 2 towns. He has stayed at home for 2 months before returning to the streets.

13 Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Questionnaire Form

Semi-Structured Questionnaire Form

Gender: ☐ Female Age
☐ Male Original district

Spoken Language (s)

Residence (or slum area)

	Name	Residence	Contact	Alive	Dead
Mother					
Father					

Number of Sibling(s) if any!

Siblings on Street

Lived in another town (street)?

1. When did you first move to the streets, why did you move to the streets?

2. Have you been through any rehabilitation program since arriving on the street, which one?

3. Who convinced you to participate in the program/ arrangement?

4. How long did you stay in the program?

5. Did you know other members in the rehabilitation program? Did they influence your decision to join / stay?

6. What did the program / arrangement offer (accommodation, training, education, employment, care, relational, food, medical)?

7. Did you keep in contact with the street (employment, social, activities, substances) or street friends (physical visits, calls etc)?

8. How was your interaction with host and/or staff?

9. On a scale of 1-10, how good was the care given?

10. What did you like about the program (accommodation, training, education, employment, care, relational, food, medical)?

11. What did you not like about the program (accommodation, training, education, employment, care, relational, food, medical)?

12. What did you miss about the streets?

13. How did you decide to return to the street/ leave the program?

14. What do you think about your current living/ survival arrangements?

15. Would you return to the previous program/ arrangement if possible? (Why not or Yes)

16. What is an ideal possible program or arrangement for you?
